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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
Princeton, N. J.

BX 9318 .H68 1837
Howe, John, 1630-1705.
The Redeemer's tears wept
over lost souls

REVD JOHN HOWE A.M.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER LOST SOULS;

AND

TWO DISCOURSES,

ON SELF-DEDICATION, AND ON YIELDING OURSELVES TO GOD

BY THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, A.M.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY ROBERT GORDON, D.D.,

EDINBURGH.

FIFTH EDITION.

GLASGOW:

WILLIAM COLLINS, 155, INGRAM STREET;

OLIVER & BOYD, WM. WHYTE & CO., AND WM. OLIPHANT & SON, EDINBURGH; W. F. WAKEMAN, DUBLIN; WHITTAKER & CO., HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO., AND SIMPKIN & MARSHALL, LONDON.

M DCCC XXXVII.

W. Collins & Co. Glasgow.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It can hardly have escaped the observation of any one who has read the Bible with attention, that in all the communications which the Almighty has been pleased to make to his rebellious subjects, he has employed language the best calculated to make its way to the heart and affections of mankind—that while his remonstrances with the impenitent present a lamentable picture of the most unreasonable hostility, and unprovoked aggression on their part, they bear testimony, at the same time, to the most compassionate forbearance on his—and that as often as he directly addresses the penitent and believing, whether it be in the way of reproof or of consolation, it is still in terms that breathe all the affectionate tenderness of a father's love. That such is the language of Scripture nobody can for a moment dispute, and that the design of such language is to remove those unworthy suspicions of the divine character, which go to array the feelings and affections of the human heart in hostility to its Maker, and perpetuate the enmity of the carnal mind against God, is equally obvious and incontrovertible. It

will readily be admitted, too, that if any thing approaching to such generosity and unmerited forbearance, could be manifested by one human being towards another, it could not fail to extort a universal tribute of admiration and respect, and that the common consent of mankind would pronounce that man to have reached the very last stage of moral insensibility, who could remain unaffected by such treatment on the part of one whom he had injured, or whose hostility that treatment would fail to disarm. And yet, is not such, in point of fact, the reception that the compassion of God has met with on the part of not a few of his offending creatures? Are there not multitudes who are conscious that they have never been deeply or permanently affected by all the tenderness of that commiseration which God has mingled with the very severest of his denunciations against the workers of iniquity—that if, at any time, their conscience is alarmed on contemplating the rigorous requirements, and inviolable sanctions of his law, as necessarily demanding a full and perfect satisfaction, they receive, at such a moment, with suspicion and distrust, the solemn declarations of his word, that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner—and that even when they succeed in suppressing that anxiety, and take refuge in those views of the divine mercy, which represent him as looking on sin with too indulgent an eye, ever to carry into effect against it the award of a righteous retribution, instead of feeling their heart captivated by such an idea of the divine goodness, they acknowledge it (if indeed they acknowledge it at all) with a heartlessness and

an indifference which they would be ashamed to offer in return for the slightest expressions of kindness and good-will on the part of a fellow creature? And what is the necessary inference that we are compelled to draw from such a fact? Is it not just virtually saying, that they attach no credit at all to any part of the divine testimony—that they are obstinately and systematically labouring to exclude any thing like a sober and serious conviction of its reality and truth—that the solemn declarations of Scripture, regarding the inevitable ruin which awaits an impenitent rebel against the holy and righteous government of God, have never produced any more permanent or salutary impressions on their minds, than if they were so many idle threats that are never seriously intended to be carried into execution—and that all the expressions of pity and compassion which the Almighty has condescended to employ, in urging upon them their infatuation and guilt, have affected their hearts just as little, as if there were no sincerity, and no meaning in such expressions? They must be conscious in fact, though they might not be very willing to acknowledge it, that they would be better pleased to be let altogether alone, and permitted to enjoy a state of undisturbed indifference regarding spiritual things, than to be assailed by any entreaty, however earnest, or any remonstrance, however tender—and that they feel towards the effusions of divine pity and commiseration, which the Scriptures pour out over the impenitence and unbelief of an ungodly world, very much as an alienated and disobedient child would feel towards the tears and entreaties

of an affectionate but virtuous father, who should seek to detach him from his profligate associates, and win him over from the paths of folly and of shame.

There is no difficulty then in accounting for the indifference with which one class of men peruse the language of compassion and pity, in which God has vouchsafed to address sinners in the Bible. That indifference is the consequence of their having no serious conviction of the reality of any such compassion on the part of God, as that language would seem to imply—and they doubt or question it, because they are unwilling to believe that the gospel method of extending mercy to sinners, is the only one that is consistent with the unalterable principles of the divine government. But there is reason to believe, even with respect to such as have felt the winning influence of the love of Christ, and who can testify, from what they have experienced, that nothing but this influence could ever have dislodged the spirit of aversion to God and holiness, which they once cherished, and which, in the days of their unbelief, gathered strength from the very representations of the divine character, which were intended to overthrow it, there is reason, we say, to believe, even with regard to such persons, that they do not always surrender themselves so unreservedly as they are both warranted and required to do, to those feelings of love, and gratitude, and confidence, which the affectionate tenderness of Scripture language, as addressed to them, is we conceive both fitted and intended to awaken. To the condescension of that

language, they cannot indeed be insensible, nor can they fail to draw consolation and encouragement from it, as often as they peruse it in the simplicity of faith, and with the firm persuasion that it promises nothing that will not be fulfilled far beyond what it is possible for them to conceive. But there are many, we are persuaded, who will be ready to acknowledge, that they have sometimes attached to such expressions of Scripture as we now allude to, a vagueness of meaning which has marred not a little the comfort that they might otherwise have derived from them—that they have felt as if it were an encroachment on the majesty and dignity of the divine character, to understand that language in any sense approaching to a literal interpretation—and that though they are persuaded it is the only language that could convey to the understanding a distinct idea of the compassion and mercy of God toward sinners, yet they have often regarded it as referring rather to the effects of the divine procedure, than to any thing corresponding to it as actually existing in the divine mind. Now it is certainly true, that it never was the design of revelation to lower the character of God in the conceptions of his intelligent creatures, and it would be a most impious perversion of the language of Scripture, to understand it in such a sense, as to invest the divine nature with any of the weaknesses of created and imperfect beings, or to ascribe to him those emotions and feelings that are inconsistent with unchangeable excellence and felicity, and which necessarily imply something painful and imperfect on the part of those

in whom they exist. But is it not equally true, that when God himself vouchsafes to address his people in language of affection and tenderness, and does so without one qualifying clause to forbid them understanding him in the plain and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs, it is not for them to weigh that language with the hesitancy, and to put upon it the cautious and measured interpretation, that would go to divest it of almost all its meaning, and rob it of not a little of its practical energy and force; for when he is pleased to call himself their father, and to clothe his communications to them in all the attractions of a father's love, is it not for the plain and the obvious purpose of calling forth on their part, the affectionate submission, and the unsuspecting confidence of children. The Christian, indeed, can never cease to contemplate the majesty and perfections of God, with holy and reverential awe, and in every approach that he makes to the throne of grace, he cannot but feel and acknowledge his unworthiness to appear there. But such sentiments were never designed to interfere with that confidence towards God, as his reconciled father, which it is the design of the Spirit of adoption to impart to the believer, nor can they furnish any grounds to doubt, that there is, in the divine mind towards him, all that complacency and kindness which the simple and impressive language of Scripture appears obviously to imply; and as often therefore, as he indulges in metaphysical speculations on the precise sense in which that language is to be understood, when applied to the divine nature, he withdraws himself from

the salutary influence which it is designed to exercise over him, and relinquishes not a little of the comfort which it is fitted to impart.

But clearly and emphatically as the Scriptures every where express the compassion of God, towards sinners, it is not in this way alone that he has graciously accommodated his procedure to the weaknesses of our nature. The reality of that compassion has been demonstrated by the manner in which he has vouchsafed his communications to the children of men, as well as by the language in which these communications are clothed—and among many other passages to which we might appeal in proof of this remark, we would refer to that in which our Lord is represented as weeping over the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, and which has been so clearly illustrated, and powerfully enforced, by the Author of the following Treatise. Not only has the Almighty declared and repeated that declaration in every possible variety of expression, "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" but as if to remove all that indistinctness of conception which might cleave to our limited understanding, and all that faithless distrust which a guilty conscience is so ready to awaken, he has furnished, in the passage to which we allude, as distinct and unequivocal proofs of his pity, even for those who obstinately rejected all his counsel, and would none of his reproof, as one human being could give, in token of his compassion, for the misfortunes or the miseries of another. This indeed is the tendency of the whole scheme of the gospel, for we cannot doubt

that one of the purposes for which God was manifested in the flesh, was to exhibit to sinners, by addressing them through the medium of the sympathies and feelings of our common nature, a more palpable and impressive demonstration of divine mercy, than could have been given by the statement of any abstract truth or doctrine which inspired men might have been commissioned to reveal. But the observation is especially applicable, we conceive, to the fact stated in the verses referred to; and were we required to single out any one passage of Scripture, in confirmation of the remarks that have now been offered, we know not any to which we should sooner appeal, than that which presents to us the Son of God weeping over the coming desolation of that infatuated city, on which the day of grace had for ever closed—whose hour of retribution could no longer, in consistency with the rectitude and wisdom of the divine administration, be delayed—and the measure of whose iniquity was to be filled up by consigning the compassionate Redeemer of the world to all the tortures of a cruel and ignominious death. For a full exposition of the passage itself, we would refer to the following able and eloquent Treatise, but we may be permitted to offer a few remarks on it as strikingly illustrative of the subject to which we have been adverting. And in doing so, it will not be necessary to enter at great length on the consideration of the fact stated by the evangelist, as referring to the persons who were the immediate subjects of our Lord's interesting and impressive lamentation. To those who are disposed to peruse the passage

with that simplicity of view, and docility of mind, with which it becomes a fallen creature to receive a message from the God whom he has offended, and a message, too, which conveys to him a tender of pardon and reconciliation, the narrative of the inspired writer will scarcely require any explanation: and with regard to such as may be inclined to make it a subject of idle speculation, and to draw from it materials on which to exercise a perverted ingenuity, we would observe, that it is not consistent with our present purpose, and would minister but little to their profit, to attempt meeting and combating every cavil that they might advance, or allow such cavils to divert our attention from the practical lesson, which the subject so obviously and powerfully inculcates.

In the course of our Lord's personal ministry, he had exhibited in Jerusalem, as well as in every other quarter of Judea, manifold and indisputable evidences of his Messiahship—he had proved, that in his person were fulfilled the predictions of ancient prophecy concerning the frequently promised, and long expected deliverer—he had urged the Jews to believe on him, by all the motives that could be supposed to influence immortal creatures, and warned them, at the same time, of the fatal and inevitable consequences of rejecting him—and he had given, in a series of miracles, as beneficent in their tendency, as they were striking in their nature, every conceivable attestation to his divine authority, by which a communication from God to the children of men can be authenticated. This work of mercy and grace he continued for years to prosecute, in the face of in-

gratitude and unbelief—he patiently endured the calumnies and contradiction of sinners against himself—he manifested, on all occasions, a heart feelingly alive to the bodily sufferings, and spiritual destitution of mankind—his beneficence suffered no relaxation, and his compassion refused to be wearied out, with all the indignities and insults with which he had been loaded; and when he found that nothing would avail to remove the blindness of their understandings, or soften the obduracy of their hearts —when he contemplated the fearful extremity to which they were about to carry their enmity and unbelief, and foresaw their obstinate resistance to the testimony that was yet to be borne to his divinity, by his resurrection from the dead, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost on his disciples; even then, he shed tears of compassion over the subjects of his own holy and righteous retribution. That, in the lamentation which our Lord uttered over Jerusalem, he contemplated the spiritual desolation that was coming on the finally impenitent, as well as the destruction of the city itself, cannot, we apprehend, admit of a moment's dispute. The very ground of that lamentation was obviously their rejection of him, as the promised Messiah—a rejection so obstinate and invincible that the Spirit of God had ceased to strive with them, and had already abandoned them to all the blindness and obduracy of a reprobate mind: and we cannot doubt, therefore, that the terrible consequences of this necessary abandonment were full in our Saviour's view when he lamented that the things belonging to their peace were for ever

hid from their eyes. We are aware that these remarks have brought us to the very threshold of a profound and inscrutable mystery, and are reminded of the solemn awe with which it becomes us to approach a subject which involves the hidden counsels of unsearchable wisdom, and before which our understanding is summoned, to prostrate its every faculty in holy and humble acquiescence in truths, which God has been pleased to reveal, but which no stretch of created intelligence is adequate fully to comprehend. But may we not be permitted to observe, without travelling beyond the limits of legitimate investigation, or entering the forbidden ground of inquiry, into the secret things of the Most High, that while the compassion of God would prompt him to extend mercy to every apostate child of Adam, there are infinitely wise and righteous reasons that forbid such an indiscriminate exercise of that mercy—that though, in one sense, he wills the repentance and salvation of every sinner, inasmuch as the returning allegiance of a rebel subject must be regarded by him with complacency, as accordant with the holiness and unbounded beneficence of his nature; yet there is to him who comprehends at once all the purposes of his holy administration, a limit beyond which his Spirit must cease to strive with the obstinacy and perverseness of the carnal mind; and that, in every case, therefore, where his grace is withheld, or where his Spirit is withdrawn, it is because the holy, but, to us, unsearchable purposes of his moral government, lay a restraint, as it were, on the exercise of his compassion, and fix a point, beyond which his

forbearance cannot extend. All this, we conceive, is obviously intimated to us in the passage referred to; and is it not sufficient to silence every such presumptuous question as that which has sometimes been proposed on the subject, Why our Lord should have lamented an evil, which it was not beyond his power, as God, to have averted? May we not ask, in reply, Whether it is befitting arraigned and condemned criminals to meet with a question like this, the most affecting manifestation that can be conceived, of the unmerited compassion of our righteous Judge?—whether the tears which the Redeemer shed over the infatuation of Jerusalem, merit such a reception as to be made the subject of inquiry by a daring curiosity?—whether the impenitent, and the unbelieving, whose ruin he lamented, will hereafter venture to charge upon him, the misery which they deliberately and wilfully brought upon themselves? and whether, that very lamentation will not fearfully aggravate their guilt, and impart unspeakable bitterness to the anguish of their remorse?

We do not think it necessary to dwell at greater length on the examination of the subject, as immediately referring to the character and condition of the Jews: and we are not very willing, we confess, to enter more minutely on the inquiry to which it has sometimes given rise, and from which one may gather more to gratify a propensity for idle speculation than of what will minister to practical and profitable instruction. However mysterious the subject may appear to the humble and anxious inquirer, he will see nothing but what is perfectly intelligible in

the simple fact, that the Son of God wept over the ruin of the finally impenitent; the very mystery, with which this fact stands connected, will serve to render it, in his estimation, more impressive and affecting; and he will have no difficulty in perceiving the solemn and important lesson which it is fitted, and obviously designed, to inculcate. Though no direct reference is made, in the language of our Saviour, to any but the unbelieving Jews of that time, we cannot doubt, that what is here written, was written for our admonition; and, indeed, various considerations forbid us to limit the application of this subject to unbelievers of that or any other age. In the last intercessory supplication which our Lord offered up on behalf of his disciples, before he suffered, we find him praying, not for them alone, but for those also which should believe on him through their word; and if, in recommending his followers to the holy keeping of his heavenly Father, he contemplated the successive generations of his people through every subsequent age, may we not infer that his lamentation over the miseries of his irreconcilable enemies was equally extended and comprehensive? But, independent of this consideration, there is another view of the subject which brings it directly to bear on men of every age, and renders it universally applicable to the condition of the impenitent and unbelieving. When our Lord lamented the approaching desolation of the guiltiest, because the most highly-favoured community on earth, and shed tears of commiseration over the irremediable wretchedness of men whom he had so often laboured to convert

and reclaim, and with whose perverse obstinacy he had so long and so patiently borne, it was because he contemplated, in their final destruction, an evil which, considered in itself, was most abhorrent to his holy nature. It presented to him the melancholy spectacle of guilty creatures rejecting every proposal of mercy, and repelling every approach to reconciliation, on the part of their offended Creator; he beheld, in their final impenitency, immortal spirits, on whom he had sought to impress the divine image, and whom he would have quickened with the principles of a divine life, consigned to all the debasement and degradation of spiritual death; and he saw perpetuated in them, beyond the possibility of change, or the hope of mitigation, that enmity against God, which must necessarily bring upon reprobate spirits an eternal accumulation of guilt, and an endless aggravation of suffering. Such were, without doubt, the evils which our Lord contemplated when he uttered his compassionate lamentation over Jerusalem; and though they are evils of which we can form but a very inadequate conception, does not the simple fact that the Son of God wept, as they presented themselves to the eye of his omniscience, convey an overwhelming idea of their inconceivable magnitude? But do not the same evils accompany the final ruin of every impenitent sinner? Are not these evils just as abhorrent as ever they were to the principles of holiness, and purity, and peace, which characterize the government of an infinitely wise and righteous sovereign? And must they not still present the same aspect of malignity to

the eye of him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? We must not indeed imagine that our exalted and glorified Redeemer looks upon these evils with any thing of the painful emotions which his language and his tears indicated in the days of his flesh; or that, when the high and inscrutable purposes of his wisdom require him to withdraw divine influences from those who have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit, beyond what it is befitting his rectitude and truth to endure, his doing so can ever disturb that infinite complacency with which he can never cease to contemplate the execution of his sovereign decrees. But neither are we to imagine, that the ruin of immortal spirits presents to his all-seeing eye any thing different from what it has always done, and, from the very immutability of his nature, must necessarily do: or that there is nothing in his mind towards those who perish now, corresponding to what there was towards those who rejected him in the days of his flesh. He has expressly assured his followers, that he has carried with him, even into the abodes of ineffable glory and blessedness, all the tenderness of which he gave so many unequivocal proofs during his ministry on earth—that he is not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, or who can remain an insensible spectator of the temptations which he himself endured: and this assurance is in perfect accordance with the whole tenor of his communications to the Old Testament church. And can we suppose then, that he has forgotten the compassion with which he once looked on the infatuation of sinners? or that any change

has taken place in his mind toward those who still continue deliberately to reject the counsel of God against themselves? The careless and the unbelieving may, indeed, make their escape from such reflections, and plead the mysteriousness of this compassion, in excuse for their remaining unmoved and unaffected by it. But, mysterious as it may be, if it were competent for us to single out one hopeless and impenitent sinner, should we not be warranted to tell him, that he is pitied at the very moment that he is forsaken—that he perishes, not because God was unwilling to be reconciled unto him, but because he would not be reconciled unto God—that his turning, by penitence and faith, from his rebellious courses, would have been regarded with infinite complacency by that Almighty Sovereign whom he has compelled to arm against him all the terrors of his displeasure—and that the ruin which he has wilfully and deliberately chosen, is the very evil over which the Son of God did, in the days of his flesh, shed tears of commiseration and pity.

The object of these remarks, as we have already observed, is to remove, if possible, from the plain and impressive language of Scripture, that indistinctness in which we are so apt to envelope it, and which so frequently prevents it from making its way to the heart—to place distinctly before the sinner's eye the fact recorded in the gospel history, that the Saviour wept over the ruin of those who lived and died in a state of unbelief—to show that, in as far as the divine compassion is concerned, it is still the same as that which dictated the pathetic lamentation

over Jerusalem—and to bring the persuasive influence of this simple fact to bear on the affections of all; of those who have, as well as those who have not yet yielded to the constraining power of the love of Christ. It is to the latter indeed, that the solemn admonition, suggested by our Saviour's language, is more immediately applicable, and it is on them, therefore, that we would more especially urge it—nor do we know, within the whole range of Scripture argument and motive, any one consideration so well fitted, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, to vanquish the hostility of the natural man; or should it fail to accomplish this, any one that so fully elicits, in all its deformity, the desperate wickedness of the human heart. The sinner may at times be arrested by the solemn declaration, that there is an appointed day in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and be compelled, by his apprehension of the procedure of that day, to pause before he enters on what, his conscience tells him, is in direct opposition to the revealed will of his Judge. But however powerful such a restraint may be, and whatever struggle it may cost him again to throw it off, the principle of enmity within him, will have lost nothing of its malignant energy—nay the very restraint, which fear imposes, will arm it with a power before unfelt—and melancholy as the fact unquestionably is, yet it accords with all that we know of the constitution of our nature to believe, that such will be the effect of apprehensions like these, so long as sinners regard God as their enemy, and as prescribing limits to gratifications which they

are determined at all hazards to indulge. But when that very God, whose commandments they are thus transgressing, appeals to them in the language of earnest entreaty—when he addresses them as he addressed the backsliding Jews of old, "O do not this abominable thing which I hate;" and when he employs every possible expression that can intimate his merciful forbearance, and his willingness to receive them into his favour, to heal their backslidings and love them freely—then the opposition that is not disarmed by treatment like this, assumes a character of more hopeless and hardened impiety than even the desperate defiance of the divine displeasure; and the man who has so resisted, and who is conscious that he still continues so to resist, has travelled to an alarming length on the way towards that point, where others have become the subjects of the Saviour's compassionate lamentation. But often as such men may have evaded the force of that appeal, we would still continue to make it; for if ever they are to relinquish the unequal contest—if ever they are to be convinced of the unreasonableness of that suspicious dislike with which they eye every subject of a spiritual nature—and brought to see that they have been all along resisting the advances of a gracious Father towards reconciliation, it must be by the persuasive eloquence of such arguments as that in the passage to which we refer. Every believer can bear witness that thus it has been with him—that the love of God in Christ Jesus has melted and subdued the obstinacy which no dread of punishment ever could have vanquished—and

that the small still voice of the gospel is the only melody that can expel from the human soul, the evil spirit of distrust and of unbelief. And where is this melody to be heard, if it is not in the simple, and unadorned narrative of the inspired writer, when he tells us, that on our Lord's approach to Jerusalem, the place where, above all others, he had been calumniated and reviled—where his doctrines had been misrepresented, and his miracles ascribed to the power of devils—and where he was so soon to suffer the ignominious death, by which he was to expiate the sins of a guilty world—even with all these recollections of the past, and with the most perfect foreknowledge of the future, he beheld the city, and he wept over it? Could sinners be but persuaded of the reality of the compassion that was then manifested—could they be made to see, that there was a depth and an intenseness in that compassion, which the most complicated affliction never awakened in the bosom even of the most benevolent and humane of the children of men—and could they be convinced that this very pity is flowing forth towards themselves, in the midst of all the folly and infatuation by which they are permitting themselves to be duped and deceived—is it possible to suppose that they could summon up hardihood enough to treat such forbearance with contempt or with unconcern? And if they did venture so to treat it, could they arraign either the rectitude or the beneficence of God, if he should for ever withdraw from them his Holy Spirit—would they not be compelled to acknowledge, that indulgence to ingratitude like this,

would be a departure from the unchangeable principles of justice and truth—and whatever plea they might be disposed to urge in their own defence, when sisted at the tribunal of God, could it require any thing more, than merely reminding them of the long-suffering patience which they had experienced and abused, to awe them at once into silence and shame?

But we are aware it may be urged by many who, though they are in reality still in a state of alienation from God, have, nevertheless, the credit and respectability of a Christian profession to plead, that there is no sort of parallel between their condition and that of the unbelieving Jews—that they have never shown any such enmity to Christ, as the latter often manifested—and that they have no reason, therefore, to dread their ever arriving at that state of hardened impenitency, in which the persons, whose ruin our Lord lamented, were given up to the blindness of a reprobate mind. They may allege too, that they have never questioned, as the Jews did, the testimony which the Spirit of God bears to the truth of the gospel; either by a miraculous agency without, or the operation of his influence within them—that they have given their assent to the truth which he formerly attested, and are endeavouring, in some measure, to regulate the ordinary tenor of their life, by the laws and precepts which he has sanctioned—and that they cannot therefore in justice, or in fairness, be ranked among those, who have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit, whereby the believer is sealed unto the day of redemption. Now, in reply to all this, we would

observe, that we are not seeking to establish any parallel between those who avowedly believe the gospel, and such as openly reject it; nor does the force of the remarks that have been offered depend on any similarity, with regard to external condition and character, between the one class and the other. But we would remind those, who may be most forward to repel any such charge, that it is not enough that they have never openly denied the truth, nor publicly renounced the faith of the gospel—and that it proves but little with regard to their spiritual safety, that they have never been placed in circumstances where they could be guilty of such complicated offences, as those that stand recorded in the Gospel History against the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The question is not in what way, or to what extent they have rejected Christ, but whether they have received him—whether they have surrendered their hearts to the influence of his love, and devoted, by a willing obedience, their lives to his glory; and if they are conscious that they have not done, and have no desire to do so—that they would gladly live with as little reflection on the subject as they possibly can—and that their aversion to the spirituality of the service which he requires, is still unsubdued and unabated—then they must be held as having turned a deaf ear to all the affectionate earnestness of his remonstrances with sinners, and opposed a callous heart to all the tenderness with which he has assailed them. Nor can they, without belying their own experience, allege that they have never resisted the direct operation of the Spirit's influence on their

hearts—for where is the individual among professing Christians, who has not had his seasons of suspicion and fear regarding his eternal interests—whose heart has not at times misgiven him, in spite of all the arguments by which he may have laboured to set himself at ease, on the subject of his spiritual concerns—who has not, occasionally at least, felt the depressing weight of doubts, from which he could with difficulty make his escape—and who has not been, at one period or another, under something approaching to a conviction, that all was not right with regard to the state of his soul? And can they, who are conscious of having suppressed such awakenings, or rid themselves of such fears, in any other way than that which the gospel has provided, still maintain that they have never quenched or resisted the Spirit's influence—or can they still venture to calculate on his renewing his operation upon them, with more power and efficiency at some future period? This may, perhaps, be the condition and the sentiments of some—and they may be ready with what they conceive to be a satisfactory reply to all that has now been urged. They may oppose to the danger which these remarks would represent, as awaiting them, the unbounded mercy of God—they may flatter themselves that he will never institute so rigorous an inquiry into their character, as the statement now made would seem to insinuate—and they may even gather encouragement to their indifference, from the view that has just been exhibited of the Redeemer's compassion. But can they require to be again reminded, that the very persons

whose condition called forth the Saviour's lamentation, had shut themselves out from all share in the blessed effects of that compassion which their wretchedness had awakened—and will they venture to rely on this compassion, while they deliberately keep out of view, the principles of holiness, and justice, and truth, according to which it must ever be exercised? Is it not saying, that they will take encouragement to sin from the very mercy that is seeking to deliver them from the pollution and misery which sin has entailed upon them—is it not to calculate on their experiencing the pity which the Saviour manifested for sinners, while they are deliberately resisting the very influence with which that pity is designed to operate—is it not to degrade this principle from its lofty pre-eminence, as an attribute of the Godhead, to a level with the weakness and imperfection of humanity? O let not sinners so trifle with the solemn declarations of Scripture, as at one time to treat the divine compassion with indifference, on the ground of its being too far removed from their ordinary conceptions, either to influence their understanding, or impress their heart—and at another time to presume on its being exercised towards them, without any reference to the essential perfections of the divine nature, and the honour and dignity of the divine government. While they seek to be persuaded of its reality, let them not wilfully misunderstand its nature, or mistake its design—and let them bear in mind, that the object of every gracious invitation which the gospel contains, is to urge and persuade them, in this the day of their most merciful visita-

tion, to remember the things that belong to their peace, before they are for ever hid from their eyes.

It will not, we think, be disputed, that one of the most powerful and persuasive arguments, by which the enmity of the carnal mind can be assailed, is furnished by the simple fact, that God has left no conceivable means unemployed, whereby to demonstrate the reality of his compassion for sinners, and of his unwillingness that they should continue in a state of impenitence and of unbelief; and of the many proofs of this fact to be found in Scripture, there are none, perhaps, either more decisive or more affecting, than our Lord's weeping over the fate of Jerusalem. We are aware, that in the preceding remarks, we have done little more than hinted at this argument; but for the farther illustration of the subject, we gladly refer to the following Treatise, as containing one of the most powerful appeals to the conscience with which we are acquainted. It would be difficult indeed to point out any work, in which so much important matter has been condensed into so small a compass. Within the limits of a few pages, the reader will find exhibited, in a very striking and impressive light, the true state of the controversy which sinners are maintaining with God—the nature of faith and genuine repentance—the responsibility of those who live under the gospel dispensation, as enjoying a day of grace, which may, in various ways terminate, while they are still in a state of alienation from their Maker—the folly of the arguments by which the unregenerate will sometimes seek to justify their indolence and indifference, on

the ground that no anxiety or efforts of theirs, will avail any thing, till God is pleased to put forth upon them the efficacious influences of his Holy Spirit, the unreasonableness, as well as the mischievous tendency of those painful suspicions by which the awakened sinner sometimes permits himself to be perplexed, when he sets about determining whether his day of grace may not already be over—and a vindication of the rectitude of the divine procedure in those cases, where, in consequence of the sinner's obstinacy, the influences of the Holy Spirit are withheld, or finally withdrawn. We can hardly conceive it possible, that the most indifferent should attentively peruse this Treatise, without finding some suspicions of their safety, and some misgivings about the validity of the plea which they may have been accustomed to urge in their own defence, and by which they have hitherto contrived to reconcile their conscience to a life of thoughtlessness and folly. And should any such begin to feel uneasiness, on the recollection of the ingratitude and neglect with which they have treated the mercy and forbearance of God, we would earnestly recommend to their serious perusal the discourses on "Self-dedication," and "Yielding ourselves to God," which have been selected as an appropriate accompaniment to the Treatise, which it is the more immediate object of this publication to bring within the reach of those who may not have access to the full edition of our Author's works.* These discourses are characterized

* The public are indebted to the Rev. John Hunt, of Chichester, for a uniform edition of the whole of Howe's Works, in eight volumes, 8vo. commenced in 1810, and completed in 1822

by the same spirit of earnest and affectionate solicitude for the salvation of sinners, which breathes throughout the Treatise on our Lord's Lamentation over Jerusalem—and if any salutary impressions are made by the perusal of the one, it will be found that in the other, the Author never, for a moment, relinquishes his hold of the conscience of his readers, till he brings them to the point where every reflecting mind must be compelled to acknowledge the necessity of coming to an immediate decision on the question, which more than any other, the natural man is anxious to evade. Of the sublimity of conception, the ardour of feeling, and energy of language which distinguish the following Treatises, it is unnecessary for us to speak: but we would entreat those, into whose hands they may come, not to lay them aside with a single reading, for we may venture to assure them, that however much of their excellence they may discover on a first perusal, every subsequent one will more than confirm the estimate. It is matter of regret that these, as well as the other works of Howe, have for a long period been so little known; and we should rejoice to be in any degree instrumental in bringing into wider circulation, what, through the divine blessing, is so eminently calculated to promote the cause of vital godliness. May the Spirit of God give efficacy to the present feeble effort for awakening the thoughtless and self-secure, and seal on the hearts of all who shall peruse the following pages, the momentous truths which they contain.

R. G.

Edinburgh, October, 1822.

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THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER

LOST SOULS.

PREFACE.

WHEN spiritual judgments do more eminently befall a people, great outward calamities do often ensue. We know it was so in the instance to which the text here insisted on refers. But it is not always so: the connexion between these two sorts of judgments is not absolutely certain and necessary, yea, is more frequent with the contraries of each. For this reason, therefore, and because judgments of the former kind are so inexpressibly greater, and more tremendous, and about which serious monitions both have a clearer ground, and are of greater importance; this Discourse insists only upon them, and wholly waives the latter.

Too many are apt first to fancy similitudes between the state of things with one people and another, and then to draw inferences; being, perhaps, imposed upon by a strong imagination in both, which yet must pass with them for a spirit of prophecy: and perhaps they take it not well, if it do not so with others too. It were indeed the work of another prophet, certainly to accommodate and make application of what was spoken by a former, to a distinct time

and people. It is enough for us to learn, from such sayings as this of our Saviour, those rules of life and practice, such instructions and cautions as are common to all times, without arrogating to ourselves his prerogative, of foretelling events that shall happen in this or that. The affectation of venturing upon futurity, and of foreboding direful things to kingdoms and nations, may, besides its being without sufficient ground, proceed from some very bad principle or other. Dislike of the present methods of Providence, weariness and impatience of our present condition, too great proneness to wish what we take upon us to predict, the prediction importing more heat of anger than certainty of foresight, a wrathful spirit, that would presently fetch down fire from heaven upon such as favour not our inclinations and desires, so that, as the poet speaks, "whole cities should be overturned at our request," if the "heavenly powers would be so easy" as to comply with such furious imprecations;—a temper that ill agrees with humanity itself, not to care at what rate of common calamity and misery a purchase be made of our own immunity from sufferings. Nay, to be willing to run the most desperate hazard in the case, and even covet a general ruin to others, upon a mere apprehended possibility that our case may be mended by it, when it may be more probable to become much worse. But O how disagreeable is it to the spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour, whose name we bear, upon any terms, to delight in human miseries! The greatest honour men of that complexion are capable of doing the Christian name, were to disclaim

it. Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well-pleased spectators, yea, authors of one another's calamities and ruin! Can the tears that issued from these compassionate blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woeful catastrophe, do nothing towards the quenching of these flames!

But I add, that the too-intent fixing of our thoughts upon any supposable events in this world, argues, at least a narrow, carnal mind, that draws and gathers all things into time, as despairing of eternity: and reckons no better state of things considerable that is not to be brought about under their own present view, in this world; as if it were uncertain or insignificant, that there shall be unexceptionable, eternal order, and rectitude in another.

It is again as groundless, and may argue as ill a mind, to prophesy smooth and pleasant things, in a time of abounding wickedness. The safer, middle course, is, without God's express warrant, not to prophesy at all, but, as we have opportunity, to warn and instruct men, with all meekness and long-suffering; for which the Lord's ordinary messengers can never want his warrant; and, after our blessed Saviour's most imitable example, to scatter our tears over the impenitent, even upon the (too probable) apprehension of the temporal judgments which hang over their heads, but most of all upon the account of their liableness to the more dreadful ones of the other state; which, in the following Discourse, I hope it is made competently evident this lamentation of our Saviour hath ultimate reference unto. For

the other, though we know them to be due, and most highly deserved; yet, concerning the actual infliction of them, even upon obstinate and persevering sinners, we cannot pronounce. We have no settled constitution or rule, by which we can conclude it, any more than that outward felicity or prosperity shall be the constant portion of good men in this world. The great God hath reserved to himself a latitude of acting more arbitrarily, both as to promises and threatenings of this nature. If the accomplishment of either could be certainly expected, it should be of the promises rather; because as to promised rewards, God is pleased to make himself debtor, and a right accrues to them to whom the promise is made, if either the promise be absolute, or made with any certain condition that is actually performed. But God is always the *creditor pœnæ* —the right to punish remains wholly in himself; the exacting whereof he may therefore suspend, without any appearance of wrong, as seemeth good unto him. If, therefore, he may withhold temporal blessings from good and pious men, to which they have a remote and fundamental right, as having reserved to himself the judgment of the fit time and season of bestowing them; much more doth it belong to his wisdom to fix the bounds of his patience and long-suffering; and determine the season of animadverting upon more open and insolent offenders by temporal punishments, according as shall make most for the ends of his government, and finally prove more advantageous to the dignity and glory of it. The practice, therefore, of our Saviour, in

speaking so positively, concerning the approaching fall and ruin of Jerusalem, is no pattern unto us. He spake not only with the knowledge of a prophet, but with the authority of a judge: and his words may be considered both as a prediction and a sentence. We can pretend to speak in neither capacity, touching things of this nature.

But for the everlasting punishments in another world, that belong to unreconciled sinners, who refuse to know the things of their peace, the gospel constitution hath made the connexion firm and unalterable, between their continuing, unrepented wickedness, and those punishments. When, therefore, we behold the impudent, provoking sins of the age wherein we live, against the natural, eternal law of our Creator, persisted in, with all the marks of infidelity and obduration against the truth and grace that so gloriously shine forth in the gospel of our Redeemer, we may, after him, speak positively: "He that believeth not shall be damned,—is condemned already;—shall not see life,—but the wrath of God abideth on him. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And here, how doth it become us too, in conformity to his great example, to speak compassionately, and as those that in some measure "know the terror of the Lord!" O how doleful is the case, when we consider the inconsistent notions of many, with, not this or that particular doctrine, or article of the Christian Faith, but with the whole sum of Christianity; the Atheism of some; the avowed mere Theism of others! The former

sort far outdoing the Jewish infidelity: which people, besides the rational means of demonstrating a Deity, common to them with the rest of mankind, could, upon the account of many things peculiar to themselves, be in no suspense concerning this matter. How great was their reverence of the books of the Old Testament, especially those of Moses! their knowledge most certain of plain and most convincing matters of fact. How long the government of their nation had been an immediate Theocracy! What evident tokens of the divine presence had been among them from age to age! in how wonderful a manner they were brought out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and conducted all along through the wilderness! how glorious an appearance and manifestation of himself God afforded to them, at the giving of the law, upon Mount Sinai! and by how apparent exertions of the Divine power the former inhabitants were expelled, and they settled in the promised land! Upon all this they could be in no more doubt concerning the existence of a Deity, than of the sun in the firmament. Whereas, we are put to prove, in a Christian nation, that this world, and its continual successive inhabitants, have a wise intelligent Maker and Lord, and that all things came not into the state wherein they are, by (no man can imagine what) either fatal necessity or casualty.

But both sorts agree in (what I would principally remark) the disbelief of Christ's being the Messiah. And so, with both, the whole business of Christianity must be a fable and a cheat. And thus it is determined, not by men that have made it their busi-

ness to consider, and examine the matter, (for the plain evidence of things cannot but even obtrude a conviction upon any diligent inquirer,) but by such as have only resolved not to consider; who have before-hand settled their purpose, never to be awed by the apprehension of an invisible Ruler, into any course of life that shall bear hard upon sensual inclination; have already chosen their master, enslaved themselves to brutal appetite, and are so habituated to that mean servility, made it so connatural, so deeply inward to themselves, so much their very life, as that, through the pre-apprehended pain, and uneasiness of a violent rupture, in tearing themselves from themselves, it is become their interest not to admit any serious thought. Any such thought they are concerned (they reckon) to fence against as against the point of a sword; it strikes at their only life; the brute must die, that (by a happy παλιγγενεσία) they may be again born men. That is the design of Christianity, to restore men to themselves again; and because it hath this tendency, it is therefore not to be endured. And all the little residue of human wit which is yet left them (which because the sensual nature is predominant, is pressed into a subserviency to the interest and defence of the brutal life), only serves them to turn every thing of serious religion into ridicule, and being themselves resolved never to be reasoned into any seriousness, they have the confidence to make the trial whether all other men can be jested out of it.

If this were not the case, if such persons could allow themselves to think, and debate the matter,

how certain would the victory, how glorious would the triumph be, of the Christian religion, over all the little cavils they are wont to allege against it! Let their own consciences testify in the case, whether ever they have applied themselves to any solemn disquisition concerning this important affair, but only contented themselves with being able, amidst transient discourse, to cast out, now and then, some oblique glance, against somewhat or other, that was appendant, or more remotely belonging to the Christian profession, (in so much haste as not to stay for an answer,) and because they may have surprised, sometimes, one or other, not so ready at a quick repartee, or who reckoned the matter to require solemn, and somewhat larger discourse, (which they have not had the patience to hear,) whether they have not gone away puffed and swollen with the conceit that they have whiffled Christianity away, quite off the stage, with their profane breath; as if its firm and solid strength, wherein it stands stable, as a rock of adamant, depended upon this or that sudden, occasional, momentary effort on the behalf of it. But if such have a mind to try whether any thing can be strongly said in defence of that sacred profession, let them considerately peruse what hath been written, by divers, to that purpose. And not to engage them in any very tedious, longsome task, if they like not to travel through the somewhat abstruser work of the most learned Hugo Grotius, concerning the truth of the Christian Religion, or the more voluminous Huetius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*, or divers others that might be named, let

them but patiently and leisurely read over, that later very plain and clear, but nervous and solid discourse, of Dr. Parker, upon this subject; and judge, then, whether the Christian religion want evidence, or whether nothing can be alleged why we of this age, so long after Christ's appearance upon the stage of the world, are to reckon ourselves obliged to profess Christianity, and to observe the rules of that holy profession.

And really, if, upon utmost search, it shall be found to have firm truth at the bottom, it makes itself so necessary (which must be acknowledged part of that truth) that any one that hath wit enough to be the author of a jest, might understand it to be a thing not to be jested with. It trifles with no man. And where it is once sufficiently propounded, leaves it no longer indifferent whether we will be of it or no. Supposing it true, it is strange if we can pretend it not to be sufficiently propounded to us: or that we are destitute of sufficient means to come by the knowledge of that truth! Was this religion instituted only for one nation or age? Did the Son of God descend from heaven, put on flesh, and die? had we an incarnate Deity conversant among men on earth, and made a sacrifice for the sins of men? and hath he left the world at liberty, whether, upon any notice hereof, they should inquire and concern themselves about him or no? being incarnate, he could not, as such, be every where; nor was it fit he should be long here; or needful (and therefore not fit) he should die often. It was condescension enough that he vouchsafed once to appear

in so mean and self-abasing a form, and "offered himself to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." And whereas he hath himself founded a dominion over us in his own blood, "did die, and revive, and rise again, that he might be Lord of the living and of the dead:" and the eternal Father hath hereupon "highly exalted him, given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and that all should confess that he is Lord, to the praise and glory of God:" and hath required "that all should honour the Son as himself is to be honoured; hath given him power over all flesh; and made him head of all things to the church:" Was it ever intended men should, generally, remain exempt from obligation to observe, believe, and obey him? Was it his own intention to wave, or not insist upon his own most sacred, and so dearly-acquired rights? to quit his claim to the greatest part of mankind? Why did he then issue out his commission as soon as he was risen from the dead, "to teach all nations," to proselyte the world to himself, "to baptize them into his name," with that "of the Father and the Holy Ghost." O the great and venerable names that are named upon professing Christians! Could it be his intention, to leave it lawful to men to choose this, or any, or no religion, as their humours or fancies, or lusts, should prompt them; to disregard and deride his holy doctrines, violate and trample upon his just and equal laws, reject and contemn his offered favours and mercy, despise and profane his sacred institutions? When he actually makes his demand, and lays his claim, what amazing guilt, how swift destruction must

they incur, that dare adventure to deny the Lord that bought them! And they that shall do it among a Christianized people, upon the pretended insufficiency of the revelation they have of him, do but heighten the affront and increase the provocation. It is to charge the whole Christian institution with foolery, as pretending to oblige men, when they cannot know to what, how, or upon what ground they should be obliged; to pronounce the means and methods inept and vain, which he hath thought sufficient, and only fit for the propagating and continuing Christianity in the world; to render the rational reception of it from age to age, impossible, in his appointed way: or unless men should be taught by angels, or voices from heaven, or that miracles should be so very frequent and common, as, thereby also to become useless to their end; and so would be to make the whole frame of Christian religion an idle impertinency, and in reference to its avowed design, a self-repugnant thing, and consequently were to impute folly to him who is the wisdom of God.

And how are other things known, of common concernment, and whereof an immediate knowledge is as little possible? Can a man satisfy himself, that he hath a title to an estate, conveyed down to him by very ancient writings, the witnesses whereof are long since dead and gone? or that he is obliged by laws made many an age ago? Or could any records be preserved with more care and concern, than those wherein our religion lies? or be more secure from designed, or material deprivation? But this is

no place to reason these things. Enough is said by others referred to before. I only further say, if any that have the use of their understandings, living in a Christian nation, think to justify their infidelity and disobedience to the Son of God, by pretending they had no sufficient means to know him to be so, the excuse will avail them alike, as that did him who insolently said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I." For have not we as good means to know who Christ is, as the Egyptians at that time had to know "who was the God of Israel," though afterwards he was more known by the judgments which he executed? Although the knowledge of the only true God be natural, and the obligation thereto common to men; yet, the indisposition, to use their understanding this way, is so great and general, and "the express revelation that Jesus Christ was the Son of God," requires so much less labour to understand it, than there is in arguing out the existence and attributes of God, by an inhabile, sluggish mind, that the difference cannot be great, if any, on that side. This latter only needs the inquiry whence the Revelation comes, which, as it is not difficult in itself, so this occasion, namely, of its being proposed, doth invite and urge to it; whereas the generality of the Pagan world have little of external inducement, leading them into inquiries concerning the true God. Therefore, all circumstances considered, I see not how they that live under the gospel, can be thought to have less advantage and obligation to own Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son

of God, than the rest of the world, to own the only living and true God; or, that, the former should be less liable to the "revelation of the wrath of God from heaven," for holding supernatural truth in unrighteousness, than the other for doing so injurious violence to that which is merely natural. Unto what severities then, of the divine wrath and justice, even of the highest kind, do multitudes lie open in our days!

For besides those, much fewer, mental or notional infidels, that believe not the principles of the Christian religion, against the clearest evidence, how vastly greater is the number of them that are so, in heart and practice, against their professed belief! that live in utter estrangement from God, as without him, in the world, or in open enmity against him, and contrariety to the known rules of the religion they profess! How many that understand nothing of its principal and plainest doctrines! as if nothing were requisite to distinguish the Christian from the Pagan world, more than an empty name; or as if the Redeemer of sinners had died upon the cross, that men might more securely remain alienated from the life of God, not to reconcile and reduce them to him! or that they might with safety indulge appetite, mind earthly things, make the world their god, gratify the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it, defy heaven, affront their Maker, live in malice, envy, hatred, to one another! not to bless them, by turning them from these impieties and iniquities! As if it were so obscurely hinted, as that it could not be taken notice of, that "the grace of

God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so looking for the blessed hope." And that "Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works!" How many, again, are Christians, they know not why! upon the same terms that others are Mahometans, because it is the religion of their country, by fate or by accident, not by their own choice and judgment! the same inconsideration makes them to be Christians, that makes others to be none.

And now, shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone, over these perishing souls? have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject! "O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains!" Is it nothing to us, that multitudes are sinking, going down into perdition, under the name of Christian, under the seal of baptism, from under the means of life and salvation! perishing, and we can do nothing to prevent it! We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all, even with "all their hearts and souls, and mind and might;" that do not believe in his Son, and pay him homage, as their rightful Lord, sincerely subjecting themselves to his laws and government. But this they will not understand, or not consider. Our endeavours, to bring them to it, are ineffectual, it is but faint breath we utter. Our words drop and die between us and them! We speak to them in the name of the eternal God

that made them, of the great Jesus who bought them with his blood, and they regard it not. The Spirit of the Lord is, in a great degree, departed from among us, and we take it not to heart! We are sensible of lesser grievances, are grieved that men will not be more entirely proselyted to our several parties and persuasions, rather than that they are so disinclined to become proselytes to real Christianity; and seem more deeply concerned to have Christian religion so or so modified, than whether there shall be any such thing; or whether men be saved by it, or lost!

This sad case, that so many were likely to be lost under the first sound of the gospel; and the most exemplary temper of our blessed Lord in reference to it, are represented in the following Treatise; with design to excite their care for their own souls, who need to be warned, and the compassions of others, for them, who are so little apt to take warning. The good Lord grant it may be, some way or other, useful for good!

JOHN HOWE.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS

WEPT OVER

LOST SOULS.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

WE have here a compassionate lamentation in the midst of a solemn triumph. Our Lord's approach unto Jerusalem at this time, and his entrance into it, as the foregoing history shows, carried with them some face of regal and triumphal pomp, but with such allays, as discovered a mind most remote from ostentation; and led by judgment, not vain glory, to transmit through a dark umbrage, some glimmerings only of that excellent majesty which both his Sonship and his Mediatorship entitled him unto: a very modest and mean specimen of his true indubious royalty and kingly state. Such as might rather

intimate than plainly declare it, and rather afford an after instruction to teachable minds, than beget a present conviction and dread, in the stupidly obstinate and unteachable. And this effect we find it had, as is observed by another evangelical historian, who, relating the same matter, how in his passage to Jerusalem, the people met him with branches of palm-trees, and joyful hosannas, he riding upon an ass's colt, as princes or judges, to signify meekness as much as state, were wont to do, tells us, "These things his disciples understood not at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." For great regard was had in this, as in all the other acts of his life and ministry, to that last and conclusive part, "his dying a sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of men;" to observe all along that mediocrity, and steer that middle course between obscurity and a terrifying over-powering glory, that this solemn oblation of himself might neither be prevented, nor disregarded. Agreeably to this design, and the rest of his course, he doth, in this solemnity, rather discover his royal state and dignity by a dark emblem, than by an express representation; and shows in it more of meekness and humility, than of awful majesty and magnificence, as was formerly predicted: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King come unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

And how little he was taken with this piece of state, is sufficiently to be seen in this paragraph of the chapter. His mind is much more taken up in the foresight of Jerusalem's sad case; and therefore being come within view of it, (which he might very commodiously have in the descent of the higher opposite hill, Mount Olivet,) he beheld the city, it is said, and wept over it.

Two things concur to make up the cause of this sorrow.

1. The greatness of the calamity: Jerusalem, once so dear to God, was to suffer, not a scar, but a ruin: "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another."

2. The lost opportunity of preventing it: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," ver. 42. And again, "Thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."

1st, The calamity was greater in his eyes than it can be in ours. His large and comprehensive mind could take the compass of this sad case. Our thoughts cannot reach far, yet we can apprehend what may make this case very deplorable; we can consider Jerusalem as the city of the great King, where was the palace and throne of the Majesty of Heaven, vouchsafing to dwell with men on earth. Here the divine light and glory had long shone.

Here was the sacred Shechinah, the dwelling-place of the Most High, the symbols of his presence, the seat of worship, the mercy seat, the place of receiving addresses, and of dispensing favours: the house of prayer for all nations. To his own people, this was the city of their solemnities, "whither the tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord: for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David." He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where, through the succession of many by-past ages, the great God did use, though more obscurely, to unfold his kind propensions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known; to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance! And that now the dismal prospect presents itself, of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory! and lay waste the dwellings of divine love! His sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.

2nd, And the opportunity of prevention was quite lost! There was an opportunity: He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: He came to them as his own. Had they received him, O how joyful a place had Jerusalem been! How glorious had the triumphs of the love of God been there, had they repented, believed, and obeyed! These were the things that belonged to their peace; this was their opportunity, their day of visitation; these

were the things that might have been done within that day: but it was now too late, their day was over, and the things of their peace hid from their eyes. And how fervent were his desires they had done otherwise! taken the wise and safe course! "If thou hadst known!" The words admit the optative form, εἰ, being put, as it is observed to be sometimes with other authors, for εἴθε, *utinam;* O that thou hadst known, I wish thou hadst. His sorrow must be proportionable to his love. Or otherwise we may conceive the sentence incomplete, part cut off by a more emphatical *aposiopesis*, tears interrupting speech, and imposing a more speaking silence, which imports an affection beyond all words. They that were anciently so over-officious as to erase those words "and wept over it," out of the Canon, as thinking it unworthy so divine a person to shed tears, did greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, (which elsewhere speak of our Lord's weeping,) nor the power of divine love, now become incarnate, nor indeed the true perfections and properties of human nature: otherwise they had never taken upon them to reform the gospel, and reduce not only Christianity, but Christ himself to the measures and square of their Stoical philosophy. But these have also met with a like ancient confutation.

One thing, before we proceed, needs some disquisition, namely, Whether this lamentation of our blessed Lord do refer only or ultimately to the temporal calamity he foresaw coming upon Jerusalem? Or whether it had not a further and more principal reference to their spiritual and eternal mi-

series, that were certain to be concomitant, and consequent thereunto? Where let it be considered,

1. That very dreadful spiritual plagues and judgments did accompany their destruction very generally; which every one knows who is acquainted with their after-story; that is, that takes notice what spirit reigned among them, and what their behaviour was towards our Lord himself, and afterwards towards his apostles and disciples, all along to their fearful catastrophe, as it may be collected from the sacred records, and other history; what blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what mighty prejudice, what inflexible obstinacy, against the clearest light, the largest mercy, the most perspicuous and most gracious doctrine, and the most glorious works wrought to confirm it, against the brightest beams and evidences of the divine truth, love and power: what persevering impenitency and infidelity against God and Christ, proceeding from the bitterest enmity; "Ye have both seen and hated me and my Father:" what mad rage and fury against one another, even when death and destruction were at the very door. Here were all the tokens imaginable, of the most tremendous infatuation, and of their being forsaken of God; here was a concurrence of all kinds of spiritual judgments in the highest degree.

2. That the concomitancy of such spiritual evils with their temporal destruction, our Lord foreknew, as well as their temporal destruction itself. It lay equally in view before him; and was as much under his eye. He that knew what was in man, could as

well tell what would be in him. And by the same light by which he could immediately look into hearts, he could as well see into futurities, and as well the one futurity as the other. The knowledge of the one he did not owe to his human understanding,—to his divine understanding, whereby he knew all things, the other could not be hid.

3. The connection between the impenitency and infidelity that prove to be final, and eternal misery, is known to us all. Of his knowledge of it therefore, (whose law hath made the connection, besides what there is in the nature of the things themselves,) there can be no doubt.

4. That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are, in themselves, far the greatest, we all acknowledge. Nor can we make a difficulty to believe, that our Lord apprehended and considered things according as they were in themselves, so as to allow every thing its own proper weight and import, in his estimating of them. These things seem all very evident to any eye.

Now though it be confessed not impossible, that of things so distinct from one another, as outward and temporal evil, and those that are spiritual and eternal, even befalling the same persons, one may for the present, consider the one, without attending to the other, or making distinct reflection thereon at the same time; yet how unlikely is it, these things bordering so closely upon one another as they did, in the present case; that so comprehensive a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to enclose them both; and so spiritual a mind, apt, no doubt,

to consider most what was in itself most considerable, should, in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part! and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it!

That he mentions only the approaching outward calamity, ver. 43, 44. was that he spake in the hearing of the multitude, and upon the way, but in passing, when there was not opportunity for large discourse; and therefore he spake what might soonest strike their minds, was most liable to common apprehension, and might most deeply affect ordinary, and not yet enough prepared hearers.

And he spake what he had, no doubt, a deep sense of himself. Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity, could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city, the destroying of pompous buildings, that were all of a perishable material, the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion; to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery, and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever! When also it is plain he considered that perverse temper of mind and spirit in them, as the cause of their ruin! which his own words imply; that "the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes;" and that the things he foretold, should befall them, because "they knew not the day of

their visitation." For what could the things be that belonged to their peace, but turning to God, believing in himself, as the Messiah, bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance? Whence also there must be another latent, and concealed meaning of their peace itself; than only their continual amity with the Roman state; their peace with heaven; their being set right, and standing in favour and acceptance with God. For was it ever the first intention of the things enjoined in the gospel, but to entitle men to earthly secular benefits?

Nor can we doubt but the same things lay deep in the mind of our blessed Lord, when he uttered these words, as when he spake those so very like them: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." These other were not spoken indeed at the same time, but very soon after. Those we are considering, in his way to the city,—these, when he was come into it; most probably, by the series of the Evangelical History, the second day, after his having lodged the first night at Bethany. But it is plain they have the same sense, and that the same things lay with great weight upon his spirit; so that the one passage may contribute much to the enlightening and expounding of the other.

Now, what can be meant by that, "I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her

wings?" Could it intend a political meaning? that he would have been a temporal Prince and Saviour to them? which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed? professing to the last, "his kingdom was not of this world?" It could mean no other thing, but that he would have reduced them back to God; have gathered and united them under his own gracious and safe conduct, in order thereto—have secured them from the divine wrath and justice, and have conferred on them spiritual and eternal blessings. In a like sense, their peace here was no doubt more principally to be understood; and their loss and forfeiture of it, by their not understanding the things belonging thereto, considered, and lamented.

Therefore, the principal intention of this lamentation, though directly applied to a community, and the formed body of a people, is equally applicable unto particular persons living under the gospel, or to whom the ordinary means of their conversion and salvation are vouchsafed, but are neglected by them and forfeited.

We may therefore thus sum up the meaning and sense of these words:—That it is a thing in itself very lamentable, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus, when such as living under the gospel, have had a day of grace, and an opportunity of knowing the things belonging to their peace, have so outworn that day, and lost their opportunity, that the things of their peace are quite hid from their eyes.

Where we have these distinct heads of discourse to be severally considered and insisted on.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace.

II. That they have a day or season wherein to know, not these things only, but the whole compass of their case, and what the knowledge of those things more immediately belonging to their peace supposes, and depends upon.

III. That this day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over and lost, those things are for ever hid from their eyes.

IV. That this is a case to be considered with deep resentment and lamentation, and was so by our Lord Jesus.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace. Where we are more particularly to inquire,

1. What those things themselves are.

2. What sort of knowledge of them it is that is here meant and made necessary.

1. What the things are which belong to the peace of a people living under the gospel? The things belonging to a people's peace, are not throughout the same with all. Living, or not living under the gospel, makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation, and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews, that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient to them before, to believe in a Messiah to come, more indefinitely. Afterwards

he plainly tells them, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Believing in Christ cannot be necessary to pagans, that never heard of him, as a duty, however necessary it may be as a means. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want remedy for their other sins. But it more concerns us, who do live under the gospel, to apprehend aright what is necessary for ourselves. That is a short and full summary which the Apostle gives, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The gospel finds us in a state of apostacy from God, both as our sovereign Ruler, and sovereign Good: not apt to obey and glorify him, as the former, nor enjoy him, and be satisfied in him, as the latter. Repentance towards God cures and removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts towards him, under both these notions. By it the whole soul turns to him, with this sense and resolution:—I have been a rebellious disloyal wretch, against the high authority, and most rightful government of him who gave me breath, and whose creature I am; I will live no longer thus. Lo, now I come back unto thee, O Lord, thou art my Lord and God. Thee I now design to serve and obey as the Lord of my life, thee I will fear, unto thee I subject myself, to live no longer after my own will, but thine; I have been hitherto a miserable, forlorn, distressed creature, destitute of any thing that could satisfy me, or make me happy; have set my heart upon a vain and thorny world, that had nothing in it answerable to my real necessities, that hath flattered and mocked me often, ne-

ver satisfied me, and been wont to requite my pursuits of satisfaction from it with vexation and trouble, and pierce me through with many sorrows. I have borne, in the mean time, a disaffected heart towards thee, have therefore cast thee out of my thoughts, so that amidst all my disappointments and sorrows, it never came into my mind to say, Where is God my Maker? I could never savour any thing spiritual or divine, and was ever ready in distress to turn myself any way than (that which I ought) towards thee. I now see and bemoan my folly, and with a convinced, self-judging heart, betake myself to thee: "The desires of my soul are now unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. Whom have I in heaven but thee, or on earth that I can desire besides thee."

This is repentance towards God; and is one thing belonging, and most simply necessary to our peace. But though it be most necessary, it is not enough. It answers to something of our wretched case, but not to every thing. We were in our state of apostacy, averse and disaffected to God. To this evil, repentance towards him is the apposite and only proper remedy. But besides our being without inclination towards him, we were also without interest in him. We not only had unjustly cast off him, but were also most justly cast off by him. Our injustice had set us against him, and his justice had set him against us; we need, in order to our peace with him, to be relieved as well against his justice, as our own injustice. What if now we would return to him, he will not receive us? And he will not

receive us for our own sakes. He must have a recompence, for the wrong we had done him by our rebellion against his government, and our contempt of his goodness. Our repentance is no expiation. Nor had we of our own, or were capable of obliging him to give us the power and grace to repent. Our high violation of the sacred rights and honour of the Godhead, made it necessary, in order to our peace and reconciliation, there should be a sacrifice and a Mediator between him and us. He hath judged it not honourable to him, not becoming him to treat with us, or vouchsafe us favours upon other terms. And since he thought it necessary to insist upon having a sacrifice, he judged it necessary too, to have one proportionable to the wrong done, lest he should make the Majesty of Heaven cheap, or occasion men to think it a light matter to have fundamentally overturned the common order which was settled between himself and men. The whole earth could not have afforded such a sacrifice, it must be supplied from heaven. His co-eternal Son made man, and so uniting heaven and earth in his own person, undertakes to be that sacrifice, and, in the virtue of it, to be a standing continual mediator between God and us; through him, and for his sake, all acts and influences of grace are to proceed towards us. No sin is to be forgiven, no grace to be conferred but upon his account. It is reckoned most God-like, most suitable to the divine greatness, once offended, to do nothing that shall import favour towards sinners, but upon his constant interposition. Him hath he set over us, and directed that all our

applications to himself, and all our expectations from him, should be through him. "Him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins." Now to one so high in power over us, he expects we should pay a suitable homage. That homage the holy Scripture calls by the name of faith, believing on him: "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." So that when by repentance we turn to God, as our end, we must also apply ourselves by faith, to our Lord Jesus Christ, as our way to that end. Which till we do, we are in rebellion still, and know not what belongs to our peace. He insists that his Son, into whose hands he hath committed our affairs, should be honoured by us, as he himself requires to be.

Now these two things sum up our part of the covenant between God and us. By repentance we again take God for our God. Repenting we return to him as our God. By faith we take his Son for our Prince and Saviour. These things, by the tenor of the evangelical covenant, are required of us. Peace is settled between God and us (as it is usually with men towards one another after mutual hostilities) by striking a covenant. And in our case it is a covenant by sacrifice, as you have seen. Nor are harder terms than these imposed upon us. Dost thou now, sinner, apprehend thyself gone off from

God? and find a war is commenced, and on foot between God and thee? He can easily conquer and crush thee to nothing, but he offers thee terms of peace, upon which he is willing to enter into covenant with thee. Dost thou like his terms? Art thou willing to return to him, and take him again for thy God? to resign and commit thyself with unfeigned trust and subjection, into the hands of his Son thy Redeemer? These are "the things which belong to thy peace." See that thou now know them.

2. But what knowledge of them is it that is here meant. The thing speaks itself. It is not a mere contemplative knowledge. We must so know them as to do them; otherwise the increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow. Thy guilt and misery will be the greater. To know any thing that concerns our practice, is to no purpose, if we do not practise it. It was an Hebrew form of speech, and is a common form, by words of knowledge to imply practice. It being taken for granted, that in matters so very reasonable and important, if what we are to do, once be rightly known, it will be done. Thus, elsewhere, the same great requisites to eternal life and blessedness are expressed by our Lord: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It being supposed and taken for granted, that a true vivid knowledge of God and Christ will immediately form the soul to all suitable dispositions and deportments towards the one and the other; and consequently to all men also, as Christian precepts do direct to all the acts of sobriety, justice, and charity,

unto which the law of Christ obliges. An habitual course of sin, in any kind, is inconsistent with this knowledge of the things of our peace, and therefore with our peace itself. All sin is in a true sense reducible to ignorance; and customary sinning into total destitution of divine knowledge. According to the usual style of the sacred writings, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God." "He that sinneth," that is, that is a doer of sin, a worker of iniquity, "hath not seen God."

II. Such as live under the gospel have a day, or a present opportunity, for the obtaining the knowledge of these things immediately belonging to their peace, and of whatsoever is besides necessary thereunto. I say nothing of what opportunities they have who never lived under the gospel; who yet no doubt might generally know more than they do; and know better what they do know. It suffices us who enjoy the gospel, to understand our own advantages thereby. Nor, as to those who do enjoy it, is every one's day of equal clearness. How few in comparison, have ever seen such a day as Jerusalem at this time did! made by the immediate beams of the Sun of Righteousness! Our Lord himself vouchsafing to be their Instructor, so speaking as never man did, and with such authority as far outdid their other teachers, and astonished the hearers. In what transports did he use to leave those that heard him, wheresoever he came, "wondering at the gracious words that came out of his mouth!" And with what mighty and beneficial works was he wont to

recommend his doctrine, shining in the glorious power, and savouring of the abundant mercy of heaven, so as every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate; God was come down to treat with men, and allure them into the knowledge and love of himself. "The word was made flesh!" What unprejudiced mind might not perceive it to be so? He was there manifested and veiled at once; both expressions are used concerning the same matter. The divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that veil; "so that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." This sun shone with a mild and benign, but with a powerful vivifying light. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Such a light created unto the Jews this their day. Happy Jews, if they had understood their own happiness! And the days that followed to them, for a while, and the Gentile world were not inferior, in some respects brighter and more glorious, (the more copious gift of the Holy Ghost being reserved unto the crowning and enthroning of the victorious Redeemer,) when the everlasting gospel flew like lightning to the utmost ends of the earth; and the word "which began to be spoken by the Lord himself, was confirmed by them that heard him, God also himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever the same gospel, for substance, comes, it also makes a day of the same kind, and affords always

true, though diminished light; whereby, however, the things of our peace might be understood and known. The written gospel varies not; and if it be but simply and plainly proposed, (though to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less,) yet still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace, extant before our eyes, and divers things besides, which it concerns us to be acquainted with, that we may, the more distinctly, and to better purpose, understand these things. For instance,

1. We have the true and distinct state of the quarrel between God and us. Pagans have understood somewhat of the apostacy of man from God; that he is not in the same state wherein he was at first. But while they have understood that something was amiss, they could scarcely tell what. The gospel reveals the universal depravity of the degenerate nature even of all men, and of every faculty in man: "That there is none that doeth good, no not one"—and that every one is altogether become filthy and impure; that there is an entire old man to be put off, wholly corrupt by deceivable lusts; that the noblest powers are vitiated, the mind and conscience defiled; that the spirit of the mind needs renewing, is sunk into carnality; and that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor can be;" nor capable of savouring the things of God; that the sinner is in the flesh under the dominion and power, and in the possession of the fleshly sensual nature, and can therefore neither obey God, nor enjoy him; that it is become impossible to

him, either to please God, or to be pleased with him; that the sinner's quarrel therefore with God, is about the most appropriate rights of the Godhead. The controversy is, who shall be God, which is the supreme authority, and which is the supreme good. The former peculiarity of the Godhead, the lapsed creature is become so insolent, as to usurp and arrogate to himself. When he is become so much less than a man, a very beast, he will be a God. His sensual will shall be his only law. He lives and walks after the flesh, serves divers lusts and pleasures, and says, Who is Lord over me? But being conscious that he is not self-sufficient, that he must be beholden to somewhat foreign to himself for his satisfaction, and finding nothing else suitable to his sensual inclination; that other divine peculiarity, to be the supreme good, he places upon the sensible world; and for this purpose that shall be his God; so that between himself and the world, he attempts to share the undivided Godhead. This is a controversy of a high nature, and about other matters than even the Jewish Rabbins thought of, who, when Jerusalem was destroyed, supposed God was angry with them for their neglect of the recitation of their philacteries morning and evening; or that they were not respectful enough to one another; or, that distance enough was not observed between superiors and inferiors. The gospel impleads men as rebels against their rightful Lord: but of this treason against the Majesty of Heaven, men little suspect themselves till they are told. The gospel tells them so plainly, represents the matter in so

clear a light, that they need only to contemplate themselves in that light, and they may see that so it is. Men may indeed, by resolved, stiff winking, create to themselves a darkness amidst the clearest light. But open thine eyes, man: thou that livest under the gospel, set thyself to view thine own soul, thou wilt find it is day with thee; thou hast a day, by being under the gospel, and light enough to see that this is the posture of thy soul, and the state of thy case Godward. And it is a great matter towards the understanding the things of thy peace, to know aright what is the true state of the quarrel between God and thee.

2. The gospel affords light to know what the issue of this quarrel is sure to be, if it go on, and there be no reconciliation. It gives us other and plainer accounts of the punishments of the other world—more fully represents the extremity and perpetuity of the future miseries, and state of perdition appointed for the ungodly world—speaks out concerning the "Tophet prepared of old"—"the lake of fire and brimstone"—shows the miseries of that state to be the immediate effects of divine displeasure—that the breath of the Almighty, as a river of brimstone, always foments those flames—that "indignation and wrath" cause the "tribulation and anguish" which must be the portion of evil-doers; and how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!" and gives us to understand what accession men's own unaltered vicious habits will give to their miseries; their own outrageous lusts and passions, which here they made it their business to satisfy, becom-

ing their insatiable tormentors; that they are to receive "the things done in the body, according to what they have done," and that "what they have sowed the same also they are to reap," and what their own guilty reflections will contribute, the bitings and gnawings of the worm that dies not, the venomous corrosions of the viper bred in their own bosoms, and now become a full-grown serpent; what the society and insults of devils, with whom they are to partake in woes and torments, and by whom they have been seduced and trained into that cursed partnership and communion; and that this fire wherein they are to be tormented together is to be everlasting, "a fire never to be quenched." If men be left to their own conjecture only, touching the danger they incur by continuing and keeping up a war with heaven, and are to make their own hell, and that it be the creature only of their own imagination; it is like they will make it as easy and favourable as they can; and so are little likely to be urged earnestly to sue for peace by the imagination of a tolerable hell. But if they understand it to be altogether intolerable, this may make them bestir themselves, and think the favour of God worth the seeking. The gospel imports favour and kindness to you, when it imports most of terror, in telling you so plainly the worst of your case, if you go on in a sinful course. It makes you a day by which you may make a truer judgment of the blackness, darkness, and horror of that everlasting night that is coming upon you; and lets you know that black and endless night is introduced by a terrible preceding day, that

day of the Lord, the business whereof is judgment. They that live under the gospel cannot pretend they are in darkness, so as that day should overtake them as a thief; and that, by surprise, they should be doomed and abandoned to the regions of darkness. The gospel forewarns you plainly of all this: which it does not merely to fright and torment you before the time, but that you may steer your course another way, and escape the place and state of torment. It only says this, that it may render the more acceptable to you what it hath to say besides; and only threatens you with these things if there be no reconciliation between God and you. But then, at the same time,

3. It also represents God to you as reconcilable through a Mediator. In that gospel peace is preached to you, by Jesus Christ. That gospel lets you see "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin may not be imputed to them." That gospel proclaims "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men." So did the voices of angels sum up the glad tidings of the gospel, when the Prince of Peace was born into the world. It tells you, "God desireth not the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live;" that he would have "all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth:" that he is "long-suffering towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" that he "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The rest of the world

cannot but collect, from darker intimations, God's favourable propensions towards them. He spares them, is patient towards them, that herein his goodness might lead them to repentance. He sustains them; lets them dwell in a world which they might understand was of his making, and whereof he is the absolute Lord. "They live, move, and have their being in him, that they might seek after him, and by feeling find him out." He doeth them "good; gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." He lets his sun shine on them, whose far extended beams show forth his kindness and benignity to men, even to the utmost ends of the earth. "For there is no speech or language whither his line and circle reaches not." But those are but dull and glimmering beams in comparison of those that shine from the Sun of Righteousness through the gospel-revelation, and in respect of that divine glory which appears in the face of Jesus Christ. How clearly doth the light of this gospel-day reveal God's design of reducing sinners, and reconciling them to himself by a Redeemer! How canst thou but say, sinner, thou hast a day of it? and clear day-light, showing thee what the good and acceptable will of God towards thee is? Thou art not left to guess only; thou mayest be reconciled and find mercy; and to grope and feel thy way in the dark, unless it be a darkness of thy own making. And whereas a sinner, a disloyal rebellious creature, that hath affronted the Majesty of heaven, and engaged against himself the wrath and justice of his Maker, and is

unable to make him any recompence, can have no reason to hope God will show him mercy, and be reconciled to him for his own sake, or for any thing he can do to oblige or induce him to it: the same gospel shows you plainly, it is for the Redeemer's sake, and what he hath done and suffered to procure it. But inasmuch, also, as the sinner may easily apprehend, that it can never answer the necessities of his state and case, that God only be not his enemy; that he forbear hostilities towards him; pursue him not with vengeance to his destruction. For he finds himself an indigent creature, and he needs somewhat beyond what he hath ever yet met with to make him happy; that it is uneasy and grievous to wander up and down with craving desires among varieties of objects that look speciously, but which, either he cannot so far compass as to make a trial what there is in them, or wherewith, upon trial, he finds himself mocked and disappointed, and that really they have nothing in them. He finds himself a mortal creature, and considers that if he had all that he can covet in this world, the increase of his present enjoyments doth but increase unto him trouble and anguish of heart, while he thinks what great things he must shortly leave and lose for ever; to go, he knows not whither, into darksome gloomy regions; where he cannot so much as imagine any thing suitable to his inclinations and desires. For he knows all that is delectable to his present sense, he must here leave behind him; and he cannot divest himself of all apprehensions of a future state, wherein if

God should make him suffer nothing, yet if he hath nothing to enjoy, he must be always miserable.

4. The gospel, therefore, further represents to him the final, eternal blessedness, and glorious state, which they that are reconciled shall be brought into. They that live under the gospel are not mocked with shadows, and empty clouds, nor with fabulous elysiums: nor are they put off with some unintelligible notion of only being happy in the general; but are told expressly wherein their happiness is to consist. "Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel." It is given them to understand "how great a good is laid up in store." The "things which eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which otherwise could not have entered into the heart of man;" the things of God's present and eternal kingdom are set in view. It shows the future state of the reconciled shall consist not only in freedom from what is evil, but in the enjoyment of the best and most delectable good. That God himself, in all his glorious fulness, will be their eternal and most satisfying portion: that their blessedness is to lie in the perpetual fruitive vision of his blessed face, and in the fulness of joy, and the everlasting pleasures, which the divine presence itself doth perpetually afford. And whereas their glorious Redeemer is so nearly allied to them, flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, who, "inasmuch as the children were made partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," and is become, by special title, their

authorized Lord, they are assured (of that, than which nothing should be more grateful to them) "they shall be for ever with the Lord;" that "they are to be where he is, to behold his glory;" and shall be joint-heirs with Christ, and be glorified together with him; shall partake according to their measure and capacity, in the same blessedness which he enjoys. Thou canst not pretend, sinner, who livest under the gospel, that thou hast not the light of a day to show thee what blessedness is! Heaven is opened to thee. Glory beams down from thence upon thee, to create thee a day, by the light whereof thou mayest see, with sufficient clearness, what is the inheritance of the saints in light. And though all is not told thee, and it do not in every respect appear what we shall be; so much may be foreknown, "that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is." And because the heart, as yet carnal, can savour little of all this, and finding itself strange and disaffected to God, affecting now to be without Christ and without God in the world, may easily apprehend it impossible to it to be happy in an undesired good, or that it can enjoy what it dislikes; or, in the mean time, walk in a way to which it finds in itself nothing but utter averseness and disinclination.

5. The gospel further shows us what is to be wrought and done in us to attemper and frame our spirits to our future state, and present way to it. It lets us know we are to be "born again; born from above; born of God; made partakers of a divine nature," that will make the temper of our spirits

connatural to the divine presence: That whereas "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all;" we, "who were darkness, shall be made light in the Lord:" That we are to be "begotten again to a lively hope; to the eternal and undefiled inheritance that is reserved in the heavens for us:" That we are thus to be made "meet; to be made partakers of that inheritance of the saints in light:" And, as we are to be eternally conversant with Christ, we are here to put on Christ; to have Christ in us, the hope of glory. And, whereas, only the way of holiness and obedience leads to blessedness, that we are to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works; to walk in them;" and shall thereupon find the ways prescribed to us by him, who is the Wisdom of God, to be "all ways of pleasantness and paths of peace." That he will "put his Spirit into us, and cause us to walk in his statutes," and to account that "in keeping them there is great reward." And thus all that is contained in that mentioned summary of the things belonging to our peace, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," will all become easy to us, and as the acts of nature; proceeding from that new and holy nature imparted to us.

And whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, canst thou deny that it is day with thee, as to all this? Wast thou never told of this great necessary heart-change? Didst thou never hear that the "tree must be made good that the fruit might be good?" that thou must become a "new creature; have old things done away, and all things

made new?" Didst thou never hear of the necessity of having a new heart, and a right spirit created and renewed in thee; that except thou wert born again, or from above, (as that expression may be read,) thou couldst "never enter into the kingdom of God?" Wast thou kept in ignorance, that a form of godliness, without the power of it, would never do thee good? that a name to live, without the principle of the holy divine life, would never save thee? that a specious outside, that all the external performances, while thou wentest with an unrenewed, earthly, carnal heart, would never advantage thee as to thy eternal salvation and blessedness? And this might help thine understanding concerning the nature of thy future blessedness, and will be found most agreeable to it, being aright understood; for as thou art not to be blessed by a blessedness without thee, and distant from thee, but inwrought into thy temper, and intimately united with thee; nor glorified by an external glory, but by a glory revealed within thee: so, neither canst thou be qualified for that blessed, glorious state, otherwise than by having the temper of thy soul made habitually holy and good. As what a good man partakes of happiness here, is such, that he is satisfied from himself; so it must be hereafter, not originally from himself, but by divine communication made most intimate to him. Didst thou not know that it belonged to thy peace, to have a peace-maker? and that the Son of God was he? and that he makes not the peace of those that despise and refuse him, or that receive him not; that come not to him, and are not willing

to come to God by him? Couldst thou think, living under the gospel, that the reconciliation between God and thee was not to be mutual? that he would be reconciled to thee while thou wouldst not be reconciled to him, or shouldst still bear towards him a disaffected implacable heart? For couldst thou be so void of all understanding, as not to apprehend what the gospel was sent to thee for? or why it was necessary to be preached to thee, or that thou shouldst hear it? Who was to be reconciled by a gospel preached to thee but thyself? Who was to be persuaded by a gospel sent to thee; God, or thou? Who is to be persuaded but the unwilling? The gospel, as thou hast been told, reveals God willing to be reconciled, and thereupon beseeches thee to be reconciled to him! Or could it seem likely to thee, thou couldst ever be reconciled to God, and continue unreconciled to thy reconciler? To what purpose is there a day's-man, a middle person between God and thee, if thou wilt not meet him in that middle person? Dost thou not know that Christ avails thee nothing, if thou still stand at a distance from him; if thou dost not unite and join thyself to him, or art not in him? And dost thou not again know, that divine power and grace must unite thee to him? and that a work must be wrought and done upon thy soul by an Almighty hand; by God himself; a mighty transforming work to make thee capable of that union? that "whosoever is in Christ is a new creature?" that thou must be (of God) in Christ Jesus, "who then is made unto thee (of God also) wisdom, righteousness, sanc-

tification, and redemption;" every way answering the exigency of thy case, as thou art a foolish, guilty, impure, and enslaved, or lost creature? Didst thou never hear, that none can come to Christ but whom the Father draws? and that he draws the reasonable souls of men, not violently, or against their wills, (he draws, yet drags them not,) but makes them willing in the day of power, by giving a new nature, and new inclinations to them? It is sure, with thee, not dark night; not a dubious twilight, but broad day as to all this.

Yes, perhaps thou mayest say, but this makes my case the worse, not the better; for it gives me at length to understand, that what is necessary to my peace and welfare is impossible to me: and so the light of my day doth but serve to let me see myself miserable and undone, and that I have nothing to do to relieve and help myself. I therefore add,

6. That, by being under the gospel, men have not only light to understand whatever is any way necessary to their peace, but opportunity to obtain that communication of divine power and grace whereby to comply with the terms of it. Whereupon, if this be made good, you have not a pretence left you to say your case is the worse, or that you receive any prejudice by what the gospel reveals of your own impotency to relieve and help yourselves; or determines touching the terms of your peace and salvation, making such things necessary thereto, as are to you impossible, and out of your own present power; unless it be a prejudice to you not to have your pride gratified; and that God hath pitched upon

such a method for your salvation, as shall wholly turn to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that you are to be (of him) in Christ Jesus, "that whosoever glories, might glory in the Lord." Is it for a sinner that hath deserved, and is ready to perish, to insist upon being saved with reputation? or to envy the great God, upon whose pleasure it wholly depends whether he shall be saved or not saved, the entire glory of saving him? For otherwise, excepting the mere business of glory and reputation, is it not all one to you, whether you have the power in your own hands of changing your hearts, of being the authors to yourselves, of that holy new nature, out of which actual faith and repentance are to spring, or whether you may have it from the God of all grace, flowing to you from its own proper divine fountain; your case is not sure really the worse, that your salvation from first to last is to be all of grace, and that it is impossible to you to repent and believe, while it is not simply impossible; but that he can effectually enable you thereto, "unto whom all things are possible;" supposing that he will (of which I shall afterwards speak): nay, and it is more glorious and honourable, even to you, if you understand yourselves, that your case is so stated as it is. The gospel, indeed, plainly tells you that your repentance must be given you. Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. And so must your faith, and that frame of spirit, which is the principle of all good works. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of

works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Is it more glorious to have nothing in you but what is self-sprung, than to have your souls the seat and receptacle of divine communications; of so excellent things as could have no other than an heavenly original? If it were not absurd and impossible you should be self-begotten, is it not much more glorious to be born of God? as they are said to be that receive Christ: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

And now, that by being under the gospel, you have the opportunity of getting that grace, which is necessary to your peace and salvation; you may see, if you consider, what the gospel is, and was designed for. It is the ministration of the Spirit; that Spirit, by which you are to be born again. The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious in you the holy truths contained in the gospel. "Of his own good will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." And again, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." So our Saviour prays: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." The gospel is, upon this account, called "the word of life," as by which the principles of that divine and holy life are implanted in the

soul, whereby we live to God, do what his gospel requires, and hath made our duty, and that ends at length in eternal life.

But you will say, Shall all then that live under the gospel obtain this grace and holy life? or if they shall not, or if, so far as can be collected, multitudes do not, or perhaps in some places that enjoy the gospel, very few do, in comparison of them that do not; what am I the better? when perhaps it is far more likely that I shall perish notwithstanding, than be saved?

In answer to this, it must be acknowledged, that all that live under the gospel do not obtain life and saving grace by it. For then there had been no occasion for this lamentation of our blessed Lord over the perishing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as having "lost their day," and "that the things of their peace were now hid from their eyes," and by that instance it appears too possible that even the generality of a people living under the gospel, may fall at length into the like forlorn and hopeless condition.

But art thou a man that thus objectest? a reasonable understanding creature? or dost thou use the reason and understanding of a man in objecting thus? Didst thou expect that when thine own wilful transgression had made thee liable to eternal death and wrath, peace and life, and salvation should be imposed upon thee whether thou wouldst or not, or notwithstanding thy most wilful neglect and contempt of them, and all the means of them? Could it enter into thy mind, that a reasonable soul should

be wrought and framed for that high and blessed end, whereof it is radically capable, as a stock or a stone is for any use it is designed for; without designing its own end or way to it? Couldst thou think the gospel was to bring thee to faith and repentance, whether thou didst hear it or not? or ever apply thy mind to consider the meaning of it, and what it did propose and offer to thee? or when thou mightest so easily understand that the grace of God was necessary to make it effectual to thee, and that it might become his power (or the instrument of his power) to thy salvation; couldst thou think it concerned thee not, to sue and supplicate to him for that grace, when thy life lay upon it, and thy eternal hope? Hast thou lain weltering at the footstool of the throne of grace in thine own tears (as thou hast been formerly weltering in thy sins and impurities) crying for grace to help thee in this time of thy need? And if thou thinkest this was above thee, and without thy compass, hast thou done all that was within thy compass, in order to the obtaining of grace at God's hands?

But here, perhaps, thou wilt inquire, Is there any thing then to be done by us, whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow?

To which I answer, 1. That it is out of question nothing can be done by us to deserve it, or for which we may expect it to follow. It were not grace if we had obliged, or brought it by our desert under former preventive bonds to us. And 2. What if nothing can be done by us upon which it may be (certainly) expected to follow? Is a cer-

tainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved? 3. Such as live under the gospel, have reason to apprehend it highly probable they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. For, 1. There is generally afforded to such, that which is wont to be called common grace. I speak not of any further extent of it, it is enough to our present purpose, that it extends so far, as to them that live under the gospel, and have thereby a day allowed them wherein to provide for their peace. Now, though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair, but that being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it.

And this is that which requires to be insisted on, and more fully evinced. In order thereto, let it be considered, That it is expressly said to such, they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, for this reason, that God works (or is working) in them, that is, is statedly, and continually at work, or is always ready to work in them, "to will, and to do, of his own good pleasure." The matter fails not on his part. He will work on in order to their salvation, if they work in that way of subordinate co-operation which his command, and the necessity of their own case oblige them unto. And it is further to be considered, that where God had formerly afforded the symbols of his gracious presence, given his oracles, and settled his church, though yet in its nonage, and much more imperfect state, there he however communicated those influences of his

Spirit, that it was to be imputed to themselves if they came short of the saving operations of it. Of such it was said, "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them." And to such, "Turn ye at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit to you; I will make known my words unto you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye set at nought my counsel, and despised all my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity," &c. We see whence their destruction came, not from God's first restraint of his Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at nought his counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, "they rebelled and vexed his Spirit," and he therefore "turned and fought against them, and became their enemy," Isa. lxiii. 10. it appears, that before his Spirit was not withheld, but did variously, and often make essays and attempts upon them. And when Stephen, immediately before his martyrdom, thus bespeaks the descendants of these Jews, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," it is implied, the Holy Ghost has been always striving, from age to age, with that subborn people; for where there is no counter-striving there can be no resistance, no more than there can be a war on one side only. Which also appears to have been the course of God's dealing with the old world, before their so general lapse into idolatry and sensual wickedness, from that passage, Gen. vi. 3. (according to the more common reading and sense of those words.)

Now, whereas the gospel is eminently said to be the ministration of the Spirit, in contradistinction not only to the natural religion of other nations, but the divinely-instituted religion of the Jews also, as is largely discoursed, 2 Cor. iii. and more largely through the epistle to the Galatians, especially chap. iv. and whereas we find that in the Jewish Church, the Holy Ghost did generally diffuse its influences, and not otherwise withhold them, than penally, and upon great provocation, how much more may it be concluded that under the gospel, the same blessed Spirit is very generally at work upon the souls of men, till by their resisting, grieving, and quenching of it, they provoke it to retire and withdraw from them.

And let the consciences of men living under the gospel testify in the case. Appeal, sinner, to thine own conscience: Hast thou never felt any thing of conviction, by the word of God? hadst thou never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming thy life, of making thy peace? have no desires ever been raised in thee, no fears; hast thou never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure in the things of God? whence have these come? what, from thyself? who art not sufficient to think any thing as of thyself, that is, not any good or right thought! All must be from that good Spirit that hath been striving with thee; and might still have been so unto a blessed issue for thy soul, if thou hadst not neglected and disobeyed it.

And do not go about to excuse thyself by saying, that so all others have done too; it is like, at one

time or other; and if that therefore be the rule and measure that they that contend against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted, and given up to perish, who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so far thy neglecting and despising the grace and Spirit of God. It is true, that herein the great God shows his sovereignty, when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve by their slighting them to be forsaken alike; he gives instances and makes examples of just severity, and of the victorious power of grace as seems him good, which there will be further occasion to speak more of hereafter. In the mean time, the present design is not to justify thy condemnation, but procure thy salvation; and therefore to admonish and instruct thee, that, though thou art not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are notwithstanding conquered and saved thereby, it shall therefore fare as well with thee; yet thou hast reason to be confident, it will be well and happy for thee, if, now, thou despise and slight them not. And whether thou do or do not, it is however plain, that by thy being under the gospel, thou hast had a day wherein to mind the things of thy peace (though it is not told thee it would last always, but the contrary is presently to be told thee.)

And thou mayest now see it is not only a day in respect of light, but influence also; that thou mightest not only know notionally what belonged thereto, but efficaciously and practically, which you have heard is the knowledge here meant. And the

concurrence of such light and influence have made thee a season wherein thou wast to have been at work for thy soul. The day is the proper season for work; when the night comes working ceases, both because that then light fails, and because drowsiness and sloth are more apt to possess men. And the night will come. For, which is the next thing we are to speak to,

III. This day hath its bounds and limits, so that when it is over, and lost with such, the things of their peace are for ever hid from their eyes. And that this day is not infinite and endless, we see in the present instance. Jerusalem had her day; but that day had its period, we see it comes to this at last, that now the things of her peace are hid from her eyes. We generally see the same thing, in that sinners are so earnestly pressed to make use of the present time: "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Psal. xcv. quoted and urged, Heb. iii. 7, 8. They are admonished to "seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is nigh." It seems some time he will not be found, and will be afar off. They are told, "this is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation."

This day, with any place or people, supposes a precedent night, when the "day spring from on high" had not visited their horizon, and all within it "sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death." Yea, and there was a time, we know, of very general darkness, when the gospel-day, the day of visitation had not yet dawned upon the

world; times of ignorance, wherein God, as it were, winked upon the nations of the earth; the beams of his eye did in a sort overshoot them, as the word ὑπεριδὼν imports. But when the eyelids of the morning open upon any people, and light shines to them with direct beams, they are now commanded to repent, Acts. xvii. 30. limited to the present point of time with such peremptoriness, as that noble Roman used towards a proud prince; asking time to deliberate upon the proposal made to him of withdrawing his forces that molested some of the allies of that state, he draws a line about him with the end of his rod, and requires him now, out of hand, before he stirred out of that circle, to make his choice, whether he would be a friend or enemy to the people of Rome. So are sinners to understand the state of their own case. The God of thy life, sinner, in whose hands thy times are, doth with much higher right, limit thee to the present time, and expects thy present answer to his just and merciful offers and demands. He circumscribes thy day of grace; it is enclosed on both parts, and hath an evening as well as a morning: as it had a foregoing, so it hath a subsequent night, and the latter, if not more dark, yet usually much more stormy than the former! For God shuts up this day in much displeasure, which hath terrible effects. If it be not expressly told you what the condition of that night is that follows your gospel-day; if the watchman being asked, What of the night? do only answer, It cometh as well as the morning came; black events are signified by that more awful silence. Or it is all one

if you call it a day; there is enough to distinguish it from the day of grace. The Scriptures call such a calamitous season indifferently either by the name of night or day: but the latter name is used with some or other adjunct to signify, that day is not meant in the pleasant or more grateful sense: a day of wrath, an evil day, a day of gloominess and thick darkness, not differing from the most dismal night; and to be told the morning of such a day is coming, is all one, as that the evening is coming of a bright and a serene day.

And here, perhaps, reader, thou wilt expect to be told what are the limits of this day of grace? It is, indeed, much more difficult punctually to assign those limits, than to ascertain thee there are such: but it is also less necessary. The wise and merciful God doth in matters of this nature little mind to gratify our curiosity; much less is it to be expected from him, that he should make known to us such things, whereof it were better we were ignorant, or the knowledge whereof would be much more a prejudice to us than an advantage. And it were as bold and rash an undertaking, in this case, as it would be vain and insignificant, for any man to take upon him to say, in it, what God hath not said, or given him plain ground for. What I conceive to be plain and useful in this matter I shall lay down in the following propositions, insisting more largely where the matter requires it, and contenting myself but to mention what is obvious, and clear at the first sight.

1. That there is a great difference between the

ends and limits of the day or season of grace as to particular persons, and in reference to the collective body of a people, inhabiting this or that place. It may be over with such or such a place, so as that they that dwell there shall no longer have the gospel among them, when as yet it may not be over with every particular person belonging to it, who may be providentially cast elsewhere, or may have the ingrafted word in them, which they lose not. And again, it may be over with some particular persons in such a place, when it is not yet over with that people or place, generally considered.

2. As to both, there is a difference between the ending of such a day, and intermissions, or dark intervals, that may be in it. The gospel may be withdrawn from such a people, and be restored. And God often, no doubt, as to particular persons, either deprives them of the outward means of grace for a time (by sickness, or many other ways) or may for a time forbear moving upon them by his Spirit, and again try them with both.

3. As to particular persons, there may be much difference between such, as, while they lived under the gospel, gained the knowledge of the principal doctrines, or, of the sum and substance of Christianity; though without any sanctifying effect, or impression upon their hearts, and such as through their own negligence, lived under it in total ignorance hereof. The day of grace may not be over with the former, though they should never live under the ministry of the gospel more. For it is possible, while they have the seeds and principles of holy

truth laid up in their minds, God may graciously administer to them many occasions of recollecting and considering them, wherewith he may so please to co-operate, as to enliven them, and make them vital and effectual to their final salvation. Whereas, with the other sort, when they no more enjoy the external means, the day of grace is like to be quite over, so as that there may be no more hope in their case than in that of Pagans in the darkest parts of the world; and perhaps much less, as their guilt hath been much greater by their neglect of so great and important things. It may be better with Tyre and Sidon.

4. That yet it is a terrible judgment to the most knowing, to lose the external dispensation of the gospel, while they have yet no sanctifying impression upon their hearts by it, and they are cast upon a fearful hazard of being lost for ever, being left by the departed gospel, in an unconverted state. For they need the most urgent inculcations of gospel truth, and the most powerful enforcing means, to engage them to consider the things which they know. It is the design of the gospel to beget not only light in the mind, but grace in the heart. And if that was not done while they enjoyed such means, it is less likely to be done without them. And if any slighter, and more superficial impressions were made upon them thereby, short of true and thorough conversion, how great is the danger that all will vanish, when they cease to be pressed, and urged, and called upon by the public voice of the gospel ministry any more. How naturally desident is the spirit of man,

and apt to sink into deadness, worldliness and carnality, even under the most lively and quickening means; and even where a saving work hath been wrought; how much more when those means fail, and there is no vital principle within, capable of self-excitation and improvement. O that they would consider this, who have got nothing by the gospel all this while, but a little cold, spiritless, notional knowledge, and are in a possibility of losing it before they get any thing more!

5. That as it is certain death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible it may end with divers before they die; by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blessed Spirit of God from them, so as to return and visit them no more. How the day of grace may end with a person, is to be understood by considering what it is that makes up and constitutes such a day. There must be some measure and proportion of time to make up this or any day which is as the *substratum*, and ground forelaid. Then there must be light superadded, otherwise it differs not from night, which may have the same measure of mere time. The gospel revelation, some way or other, must be had, as being the light of such a day. And again there must be some degree of liveliness, and vital influence, the more usual concomitant of light; the night doth more dispose men to drowsiness. The same sun that enlightens the world disseminates also an invigorating influence. If the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel revelation, and breathe in it, we have no

day of grace. It is not only a day of light, but a day of power, wherein souls can be wrought upon, and a people made willing to become the Lord's, Psal. cx. As the Redeemer revealed in the gospel, is the light of the world, so he is life to it too, though neither are planted, or do take root every where: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." That light that rays from him is vital light in itself, and in its tendency and design, though it be disliked, and not entertained by the most.

Whereas, therefore, these things must concur to make up such a day; if either a man's time, his life on earth expire, or if such light quite fail him, or if all gracious influence be withheld, so as to be communicated no more; his day is done, the season of grace is over with him. Now it is plain that many a one may lose the gospel before his life end; and possible that all gracious influence may be restrained, while as yet the external dispensation of the gospel remains. A sinner may have hardened his heart to that degree, that God will attempt him no more, in any kind, with any design of kindness to him, not in that more inward, immediate way to all, that is, by the motions of his Spirit, which peculiarly can import nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are personally applied unto, so that another cannot be meant; nor by the voice of the gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they continued under it, but for their heavier doom at length. Which, though it may seem severe, is not to be thought strange, much less unrighteous.

It is not to be thought strange to them that read the Bible, which so often speaks this sense, as when it warns and threatens men with so much terror: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" And when it tells us, after many overtures made to men in vain, of his having given them up: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels;" and pronounces, "Let him that is unjust, be unjust still; and let him which is filthy, be filthy still;" and says, "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee." Which passages seem to imply a total desertion of them, and retraction of all gracious influence. And when it speaks of letting them be under the gospel, and the ordinary means of salvation, for the most direful purposes: as that, "This child (Jesus) was set for the fall (as well as for the rising) of many in Israel." As to which text the

very learned Grotius, glossing upon the words κεῖται and εἰς πτῶσιν, says, that he is of their opinion who think that not the naked event, but the counsel or purpose of God is signified by it, the same with τίθεται; and alleges several texts where the active of that verb must have the same sense, as to appoint, or ordain; and mentions divers other places of the same import with this so understood; and which therefore to recite will equally serve our present purpose, as that, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence." And "the stone which the builders refused, is made a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." With that of our Saviour himself, "For judgment, I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind." And most agreeable to those former passages is that of the prophet Isaiah xxviii. 13. "But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." And we may add, that our Lord hath put us out of doubt, that there is such a sin as that which is eminently called "the sin against the Holy Ghost;" that a man may, in such circumstances, and to such a degree, sin against that blessed Spirit, that he will never move or breathe upon them more, but leave them to a hopeless ruin; though I shall not, in this discourse, determine or discuss the nature of it: but

I doubt not it is somewhat else than final impenitency and infidelity; and that every one that dies, not having sincerely repented and believed, is not guilty of it, (though every one that is guilty of it, dies impenitent and unbelieving,) but was guilty of it before; so as it is not the mere want of time that makes him guilty. Whereupon, therefore, that such may outlive their day of grace, is out of question.

But let not such, as, upon the descriptions the gospel gives us of that sin, may be justly confident they have not, perhaps, committed it, therefore think themselves out of all danger of losing their season of making their peace with God before they die. Many a one may, no doubt, that never committed the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as he is the witness, by his wonderful works, of Christ's being the Messiah: as one may die, by neglecting himself, that doth not poison himself, or cut his own throat. You will say, but if the Spirit retire from men, so as never to return, where is the difference? I answer, the difference lies in the specific nature, and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently, in the deeper degrees of its punishment. For though the reason of its unpardonableness lies not, principally, in its greater heinousness, but in its direct repugnancy to the way of obtaining pardon, yet there is no doubt of its being much more heinous than many other sins for which men perish: and therefore it is in proportion more severely punished. But is it not misery enough to dwell in darkness and woe for ever, as every one that dies unreconciled to God must do, unless the most intense

flames and horror of hell be your portion? as his case is sufficiently bad that must die as an ordinary felon, though he is not to be hanged, drawn and quartered.

Nor is there any place, or pretence for so profane a thought, as if there were any colour of unrighteousness in this course of procedure with such men. Is it unjust severity, to let the gospel become deadly to them, whose own malignity perverts it, against its nature and genuine tendency, into a "savour of death," which it is to them (as the mentioned author speaks) who may be truly said to seek their own destruction; or that God should intend their more aggravated condemnation, even from the despised gospel itself, who, when such light is come into the world, hate it, show themselves *lucifugi tenebriones*, as he also phrases it, speaking further upon that first mentioned text, "such as fly from the light, choose and love to lurk in darkness?" He must have very low thoughts of divine favour and acceptance of Christ, and grace, and glory, that can have hard thoughts of God, for his vindicating, with greatest severity, the contempt of such things. What could better become his glorious majesty and excellent greatness, than, as "all things work together for good towards them that love him," so to let all things work for the hurt of them that so irreconcilably hate him, and bear a disaffected and implacable mind towards him? Nor doth the addition of his designing the matter so, make it hard: for if it be just to punish such wickedness, is it unjust to intend to punish it? and to intend to punish it according to its desert,

when it cannot be thought unjust actually to render to men what they deserve?

We are, indeed, to account the primary intention of continuing the gospel to such a people, among whom these live, is kindness towards others, not this higher revenge upon them; yet nothing hinders but what this revenge upon them may also be the fit matter of his secondary intention. For should he intend nothing concerning them? Is he to be so unconcerned about his own creatures that are under his government? While things cannot fall out to him unawares, but that he hath this dismal event in prospect before him, he must at least intend to let it be, or not to hinder it. And who can expect he should? for, that his gracious influence towards them should, at length, cease, is above all exception: that it ceasing, while they live still under the gospel, they contract deeper guilt and incur heavier punishment, follows of course. And who can say he should not intend to let it follow? For should he take away the gospel from the rest, that these might be less punished? that others might not be saved, because they will not?

Nor can he be obliged to interpose extraordinarily, and alter, for their sakes, the course of nature and Providence, so as either to hasten them the sooner out of the world, or cast them into any other part of it, where the gospel is not; lest they should, by living still under it, be obnoxious to the severer punishment. For whither would this lead? he should, by equal reason, have been obliged to prevent men sinning at all, that they might not be liable to any

punishment: and so not to have made the world, or have otherwise framed the methods of his government, and less suitably to a whole community of reasonable creatures; or to have made an end of the world long ago, and have quitted all his great designs in it, lest some should sin on and incur proportionable punishment! or to have provided extraordinarily that all should do and fare alike; and that it might never have come to pass, that it should be less tolerable for Capernaum, and Chorazin, and Bethsaida, than for Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom, and Gomorrah. But is there unrighteousness with God? or is he unrighteous in taking vengeance? or is he therefore unjust, because "he will render to every one according to his works; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek glory, honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile?" Doth righteousness itself make him unrighteous? O sinner, understand how much better it is to avoid the stroke of divine justice, than accuse it! God will be found true, and every man a liar, "that he may be justified when he speaks, and be clear when he judges."

6. Yet are we not to imagine any certain fixed rule, according whereto (except in the case of the unpardonable sin) the divine dispensation is measured in cases of this nature, namely, That, when a sinner hath contended just so long, or to such a degree, against his grace and Spirit in his gospel, he shall be

finally rejected; or if but so long, or not to such a degree, he is yet certainly to be further tried, or treated with. It is little to be doubted, but he puts forth the power of victorious grace, at length, upon some more obstinate and obdurate sinners, and that have longer persisted in their rebellions; (not having sinned the unpardonable sin;) and gives over some sooner, as it seems good unto him. Nor doth he herein owe an account to any man of his matters. Here sovereign good pleasure rules and arbitrates, that is tied to no certain rule. Neither, in these variations, is there any show of that blameable προσωπολημψία, or accepting of persons, which, in his own word, he so expressly disclaims. We must distinguish matters of right, (even such as are so by promise only, as well as others,) and matters of mere unpromised favour. In matters of right, to be an accepter of persons is a thing most highly culpable with men, and which can have no place with the holy God: that is, When a human judge hath his rule before him, according whereto he is to estimate men's rights, in judgment; there, to regard the person of the rich, or of the poor, to the prejudice of the justice of the cause, were an insufferable iniquity; as it were also in a private person, to withhold another's right, because he hath no kindness for him: so even the great God himself, though of mere grace he first fixed and established the rule (fitly therefore called the covenant, or law of grace) by which he will proceed in pardoning and justifying men, or in condemning and holding them guilty, both here and in the final judgment; yet, having fixed it, he will

never recede from it, so as either to acquit an impenitent unbeliever, or condemn a believing penitent. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive. None shall be ever able to accuse him of breach of faith, or of transgressing his own rules of justice. We find it therefore said, in reference to the judgment of the last day, "when God shall render to every man according to his works," whether they be Jews or Gentiles, that "there is no respect of persons with God." Yet he who has promised pardon to the penitent, has not promised penitence to the sinner—whereas he hath, by his evangelical law, ascertained pardon to one that sincerely obeys it, but hath not promised grace to enable them to do so; to them that have long continued wilfully disobedient and rebellious, this communication of grace is, therefore, left arbitrary, and to be dispensed, as the matter of free and unassured favour, as it seems him good. And, indeed, if in matters of arbitrary favour, respect of persons ought to have no place, friendship were quite excluded the world, and would be swallowed up of strict and rigid justice. I ought to take all men for my friends alike, otherwise than as justice should oblige me to be more respectful to men of more merit.

7. Wherefore no man can certainly know, or ought to conclude, concerning himself or others, as long as they live, that the season of grace is quite over with him. As we can conceive no rule God hath set to himself to proceed by, in ordinary cases of this nature; so nor is there any he hath set us to judge by, in this case. It were to no purpose, and could be of no use to men, to know so much;

therefore it were unreasonable to expect God should have settled and declared any rule, by which they might come by the knowledge of it. As the case is then, namely, there being no such rule, no such thing can be concluded; for who can tell what an arbitrary, sovereign, free agent will do, if he declare not his own purpose himself? How should it be known, when the Spirit of God hath been often working upon the soul of a man, that this or that shall be the last act, and that he will never put forth another? And why should God make it known? To the person himself whose case it is, it is manifest it could be no benefit. Nor is it to be thought the Holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen to all the world, that every man's destruction was, entirely, and to the last of himself. If God had made it evident to a man, that he were finally rejected, he were obliged to believe it. But shall it ever be said, God hath made any thing a man's duty which were inconsistent with his felicity? The having sinned himself into such a condition wherein he is forsaken of God, is, indeed, inconsistent with it. And so the case is to stand, that is, that his perdition be in immediate connection with his sin, not with his duty: as it would be in immediate, necessary connexion with his duty, if he were bound to believe himself finally forsaken, and a lost creature. For that belief makes him hopeless, and a very devil; justifies his unbelief of the gospel, towards himself, by removing and shutting up, towards him, the object of such a faith, and consequently brings the matter to this state, that

he perishes, not because he doth not believe God reconcilable to man, but because, with particular application to himself, he ought not so to believe. See more to this purpose in the Appendix.

And it were most unfit, and of very pernicious consequence, that such a thing should be generally known concerning others. It were to anticipate the final judgment, to create a hell upon earth, to tempt them whose doom were already known, to do all the mischief in the world, which malice and despair can suggest, and prompt them unto; it were to mingle devils with men, and fill the world with confusion! How should parents know how to behave themselves towards children, a husband towards the wife of his bosom, in such a case, if it were known they were no more to counsel, exhort, admonish them, pray with or for them, than if they were devils?

And if there were such a rule, how frequent misapplications would the fallible and distempered minds of men make of it? So that they would be apt to fancy themselves warranted to judge severely, or uncharitably, and, as the truth of the case perhaps is, unjustly concerning others, from which they are so hardly withheld, when they have no such pretence to embolden them to it, but are so strictly forbidden it: and the judgment-seat so fenced, as it is, by the most awful interdicts, against their usurpation and encroachments.

We are therefore to reverence the wisdom of the divine government, that things of this nature are among the arcana of it; some of those secrets which belong not to us. He hath revealed what was fit

and necessary for us and our children, and envies to man no useful knowledge.

But it may be said, when the apostle directs to pray for a brother whom we see sinning a sin that is not unto death, and adds, " There is a sin unto death, I do not say ye shall pray for it;" is it not implied that it may be known when one sins that sin unto death, not only to himself, but even to others too? I answer, it is implied there may be too probable appearances of it, and much ground to suspect and fear it concerning some, in some cases. As when any, against the highest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, (the proper and most sufficiently credible testimony, whereof he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, under heads to which the whole evidence of the truth of Christianity may be fitly enough reduced,) do, notwithstanding, from that malice which blinds their understanding, persist in infidelity, or apostatize and relapse into it, from a former profession, there is great cause of suspicion, lest such have sinned that sin unto death. Whereupon yet it is to be observed, he doth not expressly forbid praying for the persons whose case we may doubt; only he doth not enjoin it, as he doth for others, but only says, " I do not say ye shall pray for it;" that is, that, in his present direction to pray for others he did not intend such, but another sort, for whom they might pray remotely from any such suspicion: namely, that he meant now such praying as ought to be interchanged between Christian friends, that have reason, in the

main, to be well persuaded concerning one another. In the mean time, intending no opposition to what is elsewhere enjoined, the praying for all men, without the personal exclusion of any; as also our Lord himself prayed indefinitely for his most malicious enemies, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" though he had formerly said, there was such a sin as should never be forgiven; whereof, it is highly probable, some of them were guilty: yet such he doth not expressly except; but his prayer being in the indefinite, not the universal form, it is to be supposed it must mean such as were within the compass and reach of prayer, and capable of benefit by it. Nor doth the apostle here direct, personally, to exclude any, only that indefinitely, and in the general such must be supposed not meant as had sinned the sin unto death; or must be conditionally excluded, if they had; without determining who had, or had not. To which purpose it is very observable, that a more abstract form of expression, is used in this latter clause of this verse. For whereas, in the former positive part of the direction, he enjoins praying for him or them that had not sinned unto death, (namely, concerning whom there was no ground for any such imagination or suspicion that they had;) in the negative part, concerning such as might have sinned it, he doth not say for him or them, but for it, (that is, concerning, or in reference to it,) as if he had said, the case in general only is to be excepted, and if persons are to be distinguished (since every sin is some one's sin, the sin of some person or other) let God

distinguish, but do not you; it is enough for you to except the sin, committed by whomsoever. And though the former part of the verse speaks of a particular person, "If a man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death," which is as determinate to a person as the sight of our eye can be, it doth not follow the latter part must suppose a like particular determination of any person's case, that he hath sinned it. I may have great reason to be confident such and such have not, when I can only suspect that such a one hath. And it is a thing much less unlikely to be certain to one's self than another, for they that have sinned unto death, are no doubt so blinded and stupified by it, that they are not more apt or competent to observe themselves, and consider their case, than others may be.

8. But though none ought to conclude that their day or season of grace is quite expired, yet they ought deeply to apprehend the danger, lest it should expire before their necessary work be done, and their peace made. For though it can be of no use to them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it; it is of great use to apprehend the latter; and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the holy Scripture abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or apposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" considered together with the subjoined ground of it,

" for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." How correspondent is the one with the other: work, for he works; there were no working at all to any purpose, or with any hope, if he did not work. And work with fear and trembling, for he works of his own good pleasure. As if he had said, it were the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one that works at so perfect liberty, under no obligation, that may desist when he will; to impose upon so absolutely sovereign and arbitrary an agent, that owes you nothing, and from whose former gracious operations, not complied with, you can draw no argument unto any following ones, that because he doth, therefore he will. As there is no certain connexion between present time and future, but all time is made up of undepending, not strictly coherent moments, so as no man can be sure, because one now exists, another shall; there is also no more certain connexion between the arbitrary acts of a free agent within such time: so that I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awakening me, therefore he will still do so, again and again. Upon this ground, then, what exhortation could be more proper than this, " Work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" What could be more awfully monitory, and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, if I should be negligent, or undutiful, he may give out the next moment, and let the work fall, and me perish!

And there is more especial cause for such an ap-

prehension, upon the concurrence of such things as these:

1. If the workings of God's Spirit upon the soul of a man have been more than ordinarily strong and urgent, and do now cease. If there have been more powerful convictions, deeper humiliations, more awakened fears, more formed purposes of a new life, more fervent desires, that are now all vanished and fled, and the sinner is returned to his old, dead, and dull temper.

2. If there be no disposition to reflect and consider the difference, no sense of his loss, but he apprehends such workings of spirit in him, unnecessary troubles to him, and thinks it well he is delivered and eased of them.

3. If, in the time when he was under such workings of spirit, he had made known his case to his minister, or any godly friend, whose company he now shuns, as not willing to be put in mind, or hear any more of such matters.

4. If hereupon he hath more indulged sensual inclinations, taken more liberty, gone against the checks of his own conscience, broken former good resolutions, involved himself in the guilt of any grosser sins.

5. If conscience, so baffled, be now silent, lets him alone, grows more sluggish and weaker, which it must, as his lusts grow stronger.

6. If the same lively, powerful ministry, which before affected him much, now moves him not.

7. If, especially, he is grown into a dislike of such preaching, if serious godliness, and what tends

to it are become distasteful to him, if discourses of God and Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavoury and disrelished; if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import, and the persons that most value them, and live accordingly; if he hath taken the seat of the scorner, and makes it his business to deride what he had once a reverence for, or took some complacency in.

8. If, upon all this, God withdraw such a ministry, so that he is now warned and admonished, exhorted and striven with, as formerly, no more. O, the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be for ever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear, would, in this case, be his great duty, and might yet prove the means of saving him: despair would be his very heinous and destroying sin. If yet he would be stirred up to consider his case, whence he is fallen, and whither he is falling, and set himself to serious seeking of God, cast down himself before him, abase himself, cry for mercy, as for his life, there is yet hope in his case. God may make here an instance what he can obtain of himself to do for a perishing wretch! But,

IV. If, with any that have lived under the gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now for ever hid from their eyes, this is, in itself, a most deplorable case, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself.

That the case is in itself most deplorable, who

sees not? A soul lost! a creature capable of God! upon its way to him! near to the kingdom of God! shipwrecked in the port! O sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen! into what depths of misery and woe!

And that it was lamented by our Lord, is in the text. He beheld the city, (very generally, we have reason to apprehend, inhabited by such wretched creatures,) and wept over it. This was a very affectionate lamentation; we lament often, very heartily, many a sad case, for which we do not shed tears. But tears, such tears, falling from such eyes! the issues of the purest, and best governed passion that ever was, showed the true greatness of the cause. Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportionable to the occasion. There needs no other proof, that this is a sad case, than that our Lord lamented it with tears, which, that he did, we are plainly told, so that touching that, there is no place for doubt. All that is liable to question is, whether we are to conceive in him any like resentments of such cases, in his present glorified state?

Indeed, we cannot think heaven a place or state of sadness or lamentation; and must take heed of conceiving any thing there, especially on the throne of glory, unsuitable to the most perfect nature, and the most glorious state. We are not to imagine tears there; which, in that happy region, are wiped away from inferior eyes: no grief, sorrow, or sighing, which are all fled away, and shall be no more; as there can be no other turbid passion of any kind.

But when expressions that import anger or grief are used, even concerning God himself, we must sever in our conception every thing of imperfection, and ascribe every thing of real perfection. We are not to think such expressions signify nothing, that they have no meaning, or that nothing at all is to be attributed to him under them.

Nor are we again to think they signify the same thing with what we find in ourselves, and are wont to express by those names. In the divine nature, there may be real, and yet most serene complacency and displacency, namely, that are unaccompanied with the least commotion, and that import nothing of imperfection, but perfection rather, as it is a perfection to apprehend things suitably to what in themselves they are. The holy Scriptures frequently speak of God as angry, and grieved for the sins of men, and their miseries which ensue therefrom. And a real aversion and dislike is signified thereby, and by many other expressions, which in us would signify vehement agitations of affection, that we are sure can have no place in him. We ought, therefore, in our own thoughts, to ascribe to him that calm aversion of will, in reference to the sins and miseries of men in general; and, in our own apprehensions, to remove to the utmost distance from him, all such agitations of passion or affection, even though some expressions that occur carry a great appearance thereof, should they be understood according to human measures, as they are human forms of speech; as (to instance in what is said by the glorious God himself, and very near in sense to what

we have in the text) what can be more pathetic, than that lamenting wish, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

But we must take heed, lest, under the pretence that we cannot ascribe every thing to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe to him a real unwillingness that men should sin on and perish; and consequently a real willingness that they should turn to him and live; which so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us, to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things, which he doth not think fit to interpose his omnipotence to hinder; and is truly willing of some things, which he doth not put forth his omnipotence to effect. That he most fitly makes this the ordinary course of his dispensations towards men, to govern them by laws, and promises, and threatenings, (made most express to them that live under the gospel,) to work upon their minds, their hope, and their fear, affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence, with which he requires them to comply, and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold, and give them the victory to their own ruin, though oftentimes he doth, from a sovereignty of grace, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline their wills, and gain a victory over them, to their salvation.

Nor is his will towards the rest altogether ineffec-

tual, though it have not this effect. For whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, though thou dost not know that God so wills thy conversion and salvation, as to effect it, whatsoever resistance thou now makest, though thou art not sure he will finally overcome all thy resistance, and pluck thee as a firebrand out of the mouth of hell; yet thou canst not say his good will towards thee hath been without any effect at all tending thereto. He hath often called upon thee in his gospel, to repent and turn to him through Christ; he hath waited on thee with long patience, and given thee time and space of repentance; he hath within that time, been often at work with thy soul. Hath he not many times let in beams of light upon thee? shown thee the evil of thy ways? convinced thee? awakened thee? half-persuaded thee? and thou never hadst reason to doubt, but that if thou hadst set thyself with serious diligence to work out thy own salvation, he would have wrought on, so as to have brought things to a blessed issue for thy soul.

Thou mightest discern his mind towards thee to be agreeable to his word, wherein he hath testified to thee "he desired not the death of sinners," that he hath "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," or in the "death of the wicked," but that he should "turn and live;" exhorted thee, expostulated with thee and others in thy condition, "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" he hath told thee expressly, thy stubbornness and contending against him, did "grieve him," and "vex his Spirit," that thy sin, wherein thou hast indulged thyself, hath

been an "abomination to him," that it was the "abominable thing which his soul hated," that he was "broken with the whorish heart of such as thou, and pressed therewith, as a cart that was full of sheaves."

Now such expressions as these, though they are borrowed from man, and must be understood suitably to God, though they do not signify the same thing with him as they do in us, yet they do not signify nothing. As when hands and eyes are attributed to God, they do not signify as they do with us, yet they signify somewhat correspondent, as active and visive power; so these expressions, though they signify not, in God, such unquiet motions and passions as they would in us, they do signify a mind and will, really, though, with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity, set against sin, and the horrid consequences of it, which yet, for greater reasons than we can understand, he may not see fit to do all he can to prevent.

And if we know not how to reconcile such a will in God, with some of our notions concerning the divine nature, shall we, for what we have thought of him, deny what he hath so expressly said of himself, or pretend to understand his nature better than he himself doth?*

And when we see from such express sayings in Scripture, reduced to a sense becoming God, how God's mind stands in reference to sinners, and their self-destroying ways, we may thence apprehend what

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* See the Appendix.

temper of mind our Lord Jesus also bears towards them in the like case, even in his glorified state. For can you think there is a disagreement between him and the Father about these things?

And whereas we find our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, one while complaining "men would not come to him that they might have life," elsewhere "grieved at the hardness of their hearts," and here scattering tears over sinning and perishing Jerusalem; we cannot doubt but that the (innocent) perturbation, which his earthly state did admit, being severed, his mind is still the same, in reference to cases of the same nature; for can we think there is any disagreement between him and himself? We cannot therefore doubt but that,

1. He distinctly comprehends the truth of any such case. He beholds, from the throne of his glory above, all the treaties which are held and managed with sinners in his name, and what their deportments are therein. "His eyes are as a flame of fire," wherewith he "searches hearts, and trieth reins." He hath seen, therefore, sinner, all along, every time an offer of grace hath been made to thee, and been rejected; when thou hast slighted counsels and warnings that have been given thee, exhortations and entreaties that have been pressed upon thee for many years together, and how thou hast hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatenings, against promises and allurements; and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come of it, and that, if thou persist, it will be bitterness in the end.

2. That he hath a real dislike of the sinfulness

of thy course. It is not indifferent to him whether thou obeyest or disobeyest the gospel; whether thou turn and repent or no; that he is truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitence, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy, and contempt of his grace, and takes real offence at them.

3. He hath real kind propensions towards thee, and is ready to receive thy returning soul, and effectually to mediate with the offended Majesty of heaven for thee, as long as there is any hope in thy case.

4. When he sees there is no hope, he pities thee, while thou seest it not, and dost not pity thyself. Pity and mercy above are not names only; it is a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place there, in far higher excellency and perfection, than it can with us poor mortals here below. Ours is but borrowed and participated from that first fountain and original above. Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heavenly pity, though thou hast made thy case uncapable of remedy. As the well-tempered judge bewails the sad end of the malefactor, whom justice obliges him not to spare, or save.

And now let us consider what USE is to be made of all this. And though nothing can be useful to the persons themselves, whom the Redeemer thus laments as lost, yet that he doth so, may be of great use to others; which will partly concern those who do justly apprehend this is not their case; and partly such as may be in great fear that it is.

1. For such as have reason to persuade themselves it is not their case. The best ground upon which

any can confidently conclude this, is that they have in this their present day, through the grace of God, already effectually known the things of their peace, such, namely, as have sincerely, with all their hearts and souls, turned to God, taken him to be their God, and devoted themselves to him, to be his: entrusting and subjecting themselves to the saving mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant, from which they do not find their hearts to swerve or decline, but resolve, through divine assistance, to persevere herein all their days.

Now for such as with whom things are already brought to that comfortable conclusion, I only say to them,

1. Rejoice and bless God that so it is. Christ, your Redeemer, rejoices with you and over you; you may collect it from his contrary resentment of their case who are past hope; if he weep over them, he no doubt, rejoices over you. There is joy in heaven concerning you. Angels rejoice, your glorious Redeemer presiding in the joyful consort. And should not you rejoice for yourselves? Consider what a discrimination is made in your case! To how many hath that gospel been a deadly savour, which hath proved a savour of life unto life to you! How many have fallen on your right hand and on your left, stumbling at that stone of offence, which to you is become "the head-stone of the corner, elect and precious!" Whence is this difference? Did you never slight Christ? never make light of offered mercy? was your mind never blind or vain?

was your heart never hard or dead? were the terms of peace and reconciliation never rejected or disregarded by you? How should you admire victorious grace, that would never desist from striving with you till it had overcome! You are the triumph of the Redeemer's conquering love, who might have been of his wrath and justice! Endeavour that your spirits may taste, more and more, the sweetness of reconciliation, that you may more abound in joy and praises. Is it not pleasant to you to be at peace with God? to find that all controversies are taken up between him and you? that you can now approach him, and his terrors not make you afraid? that you can enter into the secret of his presence, and solace yourselves in his assured favour and love? How should you "joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement!" What have you now to fear? If, when you were enemies, you were reconciled by the death of Christ, how much more, being reconciled, shall you be saved by his life? How great a thing have you to oppose to all worldly troubles? If God be for you, who can be against you? Think how mean it is for the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, to be dismayed at the appearance of danger that threatens them from the inhabitants of the earth! What if all the world were in a posture of hostility against you, when the mighty Lord of all is your friend? Take heed of thinking meanly of his power and love! Would any one diminish to himself, whom he takes for his God? All people will walk, every one in the name of his God; why should

not you much more in the name of yours, glorying in him, and making your boast of him all the day long? O the reproach which is cast upon the glorious name of the great God, by their diffidence and despondency, who visibly stand in special relation to him, but fear the impotent malice of mortal man more than they can trust in his almighty love! If indeed you are "justified by faith," and have peace with God, it becomes you so to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, as also to glory in tribulation, and tell all the world that in his favour stands your life, and that you care not who is displeased with you, for the things wherewith you have reason to apprehend he is pleased.

2. Demean yourselves with that care, caution, and dutifulness that become a state of reconciliation. Bethink yourselves that your present peace and friendship with God is not original, and continued from thence, but hath been interrupted and broken; that your peace is not that of constantly innocent persons. You stand not in this good and happy state because you never offended, but as being reconciled, and who, therefore, were once enemies. And when you were brought to know, in that your day which you have enjoyed, the things belonging to your peace, you were made to feel the smart, and taste the bitterness of your having been alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works. When the terrors of God did beset you round, and his arrows stuck fast in you, did you not then find trouble and sorrow? Were you not in a "fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation" to consume

and burn you up as adversaries? Would you not then have given all the world for a peaceful word or look? for any glimmering hope of peace? How wary and afraid should you be of a new breach! How should you study acceptable deportments, and to "walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing!" How strictly careful should you be to keep faith with him, and abide steadfast in his covenant! How concerned for his interest! and in what agonies of spirit, when you behold the eruptions of enmity against him from any others! not from any distrust, or fear of final prejudice to his interest, but from the apprehension of the unrighteousness of the thing itself, and a dutiful love to his name, throne, and government. How zealous should you be to draw in others; how fervent in your endeavours, within your own sphere, and how large in your desires, extended as far as the sphere of the universe, that "every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess to him." They ought to be more deeply concerned for his righteous cause, that remember they were once most unrighteously engaged against it. And ought besides to be filled with compassion towards the souls of men, yet in an unreconciled state, as "having known the terrors of the Lord," and remembering the experienced dismalness and horror of that state; what it was to have divine wrath and justice armed against you with almighty power! and to have heard the thunder of such a voice, "I lift my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever: if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on vengeance, I will recompense fury to mine

adversaries, vengeance to mine enemies."—Do you not know what the case is like to be, when "potsherds, that should strive but with the potsherds of the earth," venture to oppose themselves as antagonists to Omnipotency? and when "briers and thorns set themselves in battle array" against a consuming fire, how easily it can "pass through, and devour, and burn them up together?" and how much more fearful is their condition that know it not! but are ready to "rush like the horse into the battle!" Do you owe no duty, no pity to them that have the same nature with you, and with whom your case was once the same? If you do indeed know the things of your peace Godward, so as to have made your peace, to have come to an agreement, and struck a covenant with him; you have now taken his side, are of his confederates, not as equals but subjects. You have sworn allegiance to him, and associated yourself with all them that have done so. There can hereupon be but one common interest to him and you. Hence therefore you are most strictly obliged to wish well to that interest, and promote it to your uttermost, in his own way, that is, according to his openly avowed inclination, and design, and the genuine constitution of that kingdom which he hath erected, and is intent to enlarge and extend further in the world. That you do well know is a kingdom of grace; for his natural kingdom already confines with the universe, and can have no enlargement, without enlarging the creation. Whosoever they are that contend against him, are not merely enemies therefore, but rebels. And you see he

aims to conquer them by love and goodness; and therefore treats with them, and seeks to establish a kingdom over them, in and by a Mediator, who, if he were not intent upon the same design, had never lamented the destruction of any of them, and wept over their ruin, as here you find. So therefore, should you long for the conversion of souls, and the enlargement of his kingdom this way, both out of loyalty to him, and compassion towards them.

II. For such as may be in great fear, lest this prove to be their case. They are either such as may fear it, but do not; or such as are deeply afflicted with this actual fear.

1. For the former sort, who are in too great danger of bringing themselves into this dreadful, deplorable condition, but apprehend nothing of it. All that is to be said to them apart by themselves, is only to awaken them out of their drowsy, dangerous slumber and security; and then they will be capable of being spoken to, together with the other sort. Let me therefore,

(1.) Demand of you, Do you believe there is a Lord over you, yea or no? Use your thoughts: for, about matters that concern you less, you can think. Do you not apprehend you have an invisible Owner and Ruler, that rightfully claims to himself an interest in you, and a governing power over you? How came you into being? You know you made not yourselves. And if you yet look no higher, than to progenitors of your own kind, mortal men, as you are, how came they into being? You have so much understanding about you, if you would use it, as to

know they could none of them make themselves more than you, and that therefore human race must have had its beginning, from some superior Maker. And did not he that made them make you and all things else? Where are your arguments to prove it was otherwise, and that this world, and all the generations of men, took beginning of themselves, without a wise and mighty Creator? produce your strong reasons, upon which you will venture your souls, and all the possibilities of your being happy or miserable to eternity! Will your imagination make you safe? and protect you against his wrath and justice, whose authority you will not own? Can you, by it, uncreate your Creator, and nullify the Eternal Being? or have you any thing else, besides your own blind imagination, to make you confident, that all things came of nothing, without any Maker? But if you know not how to think this reasonable, and apprehend you must allow yourselves to owe your being to an Almighty Creator, let me,

(2.) Ask of you, how you think your life is maintained? Doth not he that made you live, keep you alive? Whereas you have often heard that "we all live, and move, and have our beings in him," doth it not seem most likely to you to be so? Have you the power of your own life? Do you think you can live as long as you will? At least, do you not find you need the common helps of meat, and drink, and air, and clothing for the support and comfort of your lives? And are not all these his creatures as well as you? And can you have them, whether he will or not?

(3.) And how can you think that he that made and

maintains you, hath no right to rule you? If it were possible any one should as much depend upon you, would you not claim such power over him? Can you suppose yourselves to be under no obligation to please him, who hath done so much for you? and to do his will, if you can any way know it?

(4.) And can you pretend you have no means to know it? That book that goes up and down under the name of his word, can you disprove it to be his word? If such writings should now first come into the world, so sincere, so awful, so holy, so heavenly, bearing so expressly the divine image, avowing themselves to be from God, and the most wonderful works are wrought to prove them his word—the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the sick healed, the dead raised, by a word only commanding it to be so—would you not confess this to be sufficient evidence that this revelation came from heaven? And are you not sufficiently assured they are so confirmed? Do you find in yourselves any inclination to cheat your children in any thing that concerns their well-being? Why should you more suspect your forefathers' design to cheat you, in the mere reporting falsely a matter of fact? Was not human nature the same so many hundred years ago? Did ever the enemies of the Christian name, in the earlier days of Christianity, when it was but a novelty in the world, and so much hated, and endeavoured to be rooted out, as ever any profession was, deny such matters of fact? Have not some of the most spiteful of them confessed it? Did not Christians then willingly sacrifice their lives by multitudes,

upon the assured truth of these things? Have they not been ever since most strictly careful to preserve these writings, and transmit them, as wherein the all of themselves, and their posterity was contained? And where is now your new light? where are your later discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to convict these writings of falsehood, or dare venture to disbelieve them?

(5.) But if you believe these writings to be divine, how expressly is it told you, in them, what the state of your case is Godward, and what he requires of you? You may see you have displeased him, and how you are to please him, as hath been shown before in this discourse. You know that you have lived in the world mindless, and inobservant of him, not trusting, fearing, loving, or delighting in him, declining his acquaintance and converse; seeking your own pleasure, following your own inclination, doing your own will, as if you were supreme, never minding to refer your actions to his precepts as your rule, or to his glory as your end. And from that word of his you may understand all this to be very displeasing to him: and that you can never please him by continuing this course, but by breaking it off, and returning to him as your Lord and your God: that since your case did need a Redeemer and Reconciler, and he hath provided and appointed one for you; you are to apply yourselves to him, to commit and subject your souls to him, to trust in his merits and blood, and submit to his authority and government. And,

(6.) Are you not continually called hereto by the

gospel, under which you have lived all this while? so that you are in actual, continual rebellion against him all the while you comply not with this call: every breath you draw is rebellious breath. There is no moment wherein this lies not upon you, by every moment's addition to your time. And that patience of his which adds by moments to your life, and should lead you to repentance, is, while you repent not, perverted by you, only to the "treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment."

(7.) And do you not find, as his word also plainly tells you, a great averseness and disinclination in you to any such serious, solemn applying yourself to him. and your Redeemer? Try your own hearts! Do you not find them draw back and recoil? if you urge them, do they not still fly off? How loath are you to retire! and set yourselves to consider your case! and unto serious seeking of God in Christ! both from a reluctancy and indisposition to any such employment as this is itself, and from disaffection to that whereto it tends; the breaking off your former sinful course of life, and entering upon a better. And does not all this show you the plain truth of what the word of God hath told you, "that the Æthiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as they do good who are accustomed to do evil,"—that you have a heart that cannot repent, "till God give you repentance to life,"—that you "cannot come to Christ till the Father draw you." Do you not see your case then, that you must perish if you have not help from heaven?

if God do not give you his grace, to overcome and cure the averseness and malignity of your nature? That things are likely thus to run on with you as they have from day to day, and from year to year; and you that are unwilling to take the course that is necessary for your salvation to day, are likely to be as unwilling to-morrow, and so your lives consume in vanity, till you drop into perdition? But,

(8.) Dost thou not also know, sinner, (what hath been so newly shown thee from God's word,) that, by thy being under the gospel, thou hast a day of grace? not only as offers of pardon and reconciliation are made to thee in it, but also as through it converting heart-renewing grace is to be expected, and may be had? that what is sufficient for the turning and changing of thy heart, is usually not given all at once; but as gentler insinuations (the injection of some good thoughts and desires) are complied with, more powerful influences may be hoped to follow? That, therefore, thou art concerned, upon any such thought cast into thy mind, of going now to seek God for the life of thy soul, to strive, thyself, against thy own disinclination; that if thou do not, but yield to it, and still defer, it may prove mortal to thee? For is it not plain to thee in itself, and from what hath been said, that this day hath its limits, and will come to an end? Dost thou not know thou art a mortal creature, that thy breath is in thy nostrils? Dost thou know how near thou art to the end of thy life? and how few breaths there may be for thee between this present moment and eternity? Dost thou not know thy day of grace

may end before thy life end? that thou mayest be cast far enough out of the sound of the gospel? and if thou shouldst carry any notices of it with thee, thou who hast been so unapt to consider them while they were daily pressed upon thee, will most probably be less apt when thou hearest of no such thing? that thou mayest live still under the gospel, and the Spirit of grace retire from thee, and never attempt thee more, for thy former despiting of it? For what obligation hast thou upon that blessed Spirit? Or why shouldst thou think a Deity bound to attend upon thy triflings? And,

(9.) If yet all this move not, consider what it will be to die unreconciled to God! Thou hast been his enemy: he hath made thee gracious offers of peace, waited long upon thee: thou hast made light of all. The matter must at length end either in reconciliation or vengeance! The former is not acceptable to thee: art thou prepared for the latter? Canst thou sustain it? Is it not a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Thou wilt not do him right, he must then right himself upon thee: Dost thou think he cannot do it? Canst thou doubt his power? Cast thine eyes about thee, behold the greatness (as far as thou canst) of this creation of his, whereof thou art but a very little part. He that hath made that sun over thine head, and stretched out those spacious heavens, that hath furnished them with those innumerable bright stars, that governs all their motions, that hath hung this earth upon nothing, that made and sustains that great variety of creatures that inhabit it,

can he not deal with thee, a worm? Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong, if he plead with thee? if he surround thee with his terrors, and set them in battle array against thee? Hell and destruction are open before him; and without covering, how soon art thou cast in and ingulfed? Sit down, and consider whether thou be able, with thy impotency, to stand before him that comes against thee with Almighty power? Is it not better to sue in time for peace?

But perhaps thou mayest say, I begin now to fear it is too late: I have so long slighted the gospel, resisted the holy Spirit of God, abused and baffled my own light and conscience, that I am afraid God will quite abandon me, and cast me off for ever. It is well if thou do indeed begin to fear. That fear gives hope. Thou art then capable of coming into their rank, who are next to be spoken to, namely,

2. Such as feel themselves afflicted with the apprehension and dread of their having out-lived their day, and that the things of their peace are now irrecoverably hid from their eyes. I desire to counsel such faithfully, according to that light and guidance which the gospel of our Lord affords us in reference to any such case.

(1.) Take heed of stifling that fear suddenly, but labour to improve it to some advantage, and then to cure and remove it by rational-evangelical means and methods. Do not, as thou lovest the life of thy soul, go about suddenly, or by undue means, to smother or extinguish it. It is too possible, when any such apprehension strikes into a man's mind,

because it is a sharp or piercing thought, disturbs his quiet, gives him molestation, and some torture, to pluck out the dart too soon, and cast it away. Perhaps such a course is taken, as doth him unspeakably more mischief, than a thousand such thoughts would ever do. He diverts, it may be, to vain company, or to sensuality; talks, or drinks away his trouble; makes death his cure of pain; and, to avoid the fear of hell, leaps into it. Is this indeed the wisest course? Either thy apprehension is reasonable, or unreasonable. If it should prove a reasonable apprehension, as it is a terrible one, would the neglect of it become a reasonable creature, or mend thy case? If it should be found unreasonable, it may require time, and some debate to discover it to be so; whereby, when it is manifestly detected with how much greater satisfaction is it laid aside Labour then to inquire rightly concerning this matter.

(2.) In this inquiry, consider diligently what the kind of that fear is that you find yourselves afflicted with. The fear that perplexes your heart, must some way correspond to the apprehension you have in your mind, touching your case. Consider what that is, and in what form it shows itself there. Doth it appear in the form of a peremptory judgment, a definitive sentence, which you have past within yourself concerning your case; that your day is over, and you are a lost creature; or only of a mere doubt, lest it should prove so. The fear that corresponds to the former of these, makes you quite desperate, and obstinately resolute against any means for the

bettering of your condition. The fear that answers to the latter apprehension hath a mixture of hope in it, which admits of somewhat to be done for your relief, and will prompt thereunto. Labour to discern which of these is the present temper and posture of your spirit.

(3.) If you find it to be the former, let no thought any longer dwell in your mind, (under that form,) namely, as a definitive sentence concerning your state. You have nothing to do to pass such a judgment; the tendency of it is dismal and horrid, as you may yourself perceive. And your ground for it is none at all. Your conscience within you is to do the office of a judge; but only of an under-judge, that is, to proceed strictly by rule, prescribed and set by the sovereign Lord and arbiter of life and death: there is one Lawgiver who is "able to save and to destroy." Nor is your conscience, as an under-judge, to meddle at all, but in cases within your cognizance. This about your final state is a reserved, excepted case, belonging only to the supreme tribunal, which you must take heed how you usurp. As such a judgment tends to make you desperate, so there will be high presumption in this despair. Dare you take upon you to cancel and nullify to yourself the obligation of the evangelical law? and whereas that makes it your duty to "repent, and believe the gospel," to absolve yourself from this bond, and say, it is none of your duty, or make it impossible to you to do it! you have matter and cases enough within the cognizance of your conscience, not only the particular actions of your life,

but your present state also, whether you be as yet in a state of acceptance with God, through Christ, yea or no? And here you have rules set you to judge by. But concerning your final state, or that you shall never be brought into a state of acceptance, you have no rule by which you can make such a judgment; and therefore this judgment belongs not to you. Look then upon the matter of your final condition, as an exempt case, reserved to the future judgment; and the present determination whereof, against yourself, is without your compass and line, and most unsuitable to the state of probation, wherein, you are to reckon, God continues you here with the rest of men in this world; and therefore any such judgment you should tear, and reverse, and, as such, not permit to have any place with you.

(4.) Yet since, as hath been said, you are not quite to reject, or obliterate any apprehension or thought, touching this subject, make it your business to correct and reduce it to that form, that is, let it only for the present remain with you, as a doubt, how your case now stands, and what issue it may at length have. And see that your fear thereupon be answerable to your apprehension, so rectified. While as yet it is not evident you have made your peace with God upon his known terms, you are to consider God hath left your case a doubtful case; and you are to conceive of it accordingly; and are to entertain a fear concerning it, not as certainly hopeless, but as uncertain. And as yours is really a doubtful case, it is a most important one. It concerns your souls,

and your eternal well-being, and is not therefore to be neglected, or trifled with. You do not know how God will deal with you; whether he will again afford you such help as he hath done, or whether ever he will effectually move your heart unto conversion and salvation. You therefore are "to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," because, as was told you, "he works but of his own good pleasure." Your fear should not exceed this state of your case, so as to exclude hope. It is of unspeakable concernment to you, that hope do intermingle with your fear. That will do much to mollify and soften your hearts, that after all the abuse of mercy, and imposing upon the patience of God, your neglects and slights of a bleeding Saviour, your resisting and grieving the Spirit of grace, he may yet, once for all, visit your forlorn soul with his vital influence, and save you from going down to perdition! How can your hearts but melt and break upon this apprehension! And it is not a groundless one. He that "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," will not fail to treat them well, whom he sees beginning to listen to his call, and entertaining the thoughts that most directly tend to bring them to a compliance with it. Your hope insinuating itself and mingling with your fear, is highly grateful to the God of all grace. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy."

(5.) But see to it also that your fear be not slight and momentary, and that it vanish not, while as yet it hath so great a work to do in you, namely, to engage

you to accept God's own terms of peace and reconciliation, with all your heart and soul. It is of continual use, even not only in order to conversion, but to the converted also. Can you think those mentioned words were spoken to none such: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Or, those, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it?" And do we not find a holy fear is to contribute all along to the whole of progressive sanctification? "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And that by it he preserves his own, that they never depart from him? "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Much more do you need it in your present case, while matters are yet in treaty between God and you. And as it should not exceed the true apprehension of your case, so nor should it come short of it.

(6.) You should therefore, in order hereto, aggravate to yourselves the just causes of your fear. Why are you afraid your day should be over, and the things of your peace be for ever hid from your eyes? Is it not that you have sinned against much light, against many checks of your own consciences, against many very serious warnings and exhortations, many

earnest importunate beseechings and entreaties you have had in the ministry of the gospel, many motions and strivings of the Spirit of God thereby? Let your thoughts dwell upon these things. Think what it is for the great God, the Lord of Glory, to have been slighted by a worm! Doth not this deserve as ill things at the hands of God as you can fear? It is fit you should apprehend what your desert is, though perhaps mercy may interpose, and avert the deserved dreadful event. And if he have signified his displeasure towards you hereupon, by desisting for the present, and ceasing to strive with you as he hath formerly done; if your heart be grown more cold, and dead, and hard, than sometime it was, if you have been left so as to fall into grosser sin; it is highly reasonable you should fear being finally forsaken of the blessed Spirit of God, and greatly fear it, but with an awful fear, that may awaken you most earnestly to endeavour his return to you, not with a despairing fear that will bind you up from any further endeavour for your soul at all.

And if upon all this, by death or otherwise, such a ministry be withdrawn from you, as God did work by, in some degree, upon you, and you find not, in that kind, what is so suitable to your state and case; take heed lest you be stupid under such a stroke. Think what it imports unto you, if God have, as it were, said concerning any servant of his, "I will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that he shall not be a reprover to you any more!" Consider that God may, by this, be making way that "wrath may come upon you to the uttermost,"

and never let you have opportunity to know more the things of your peace. Perhaps you may never meet with the man more, that shall speak so accommodately to your condition, that shall so closely pursue you through all the haunts and subterfuges, and lurking holes, wherein your guilty convinced soul hath wont to hide itself, and falsely seek to heal its own wounds. One of more value may be less apt, possibly, to profit you; as a more polished key doth not therefore alike fit every lock. And thy case may be such, that thou shalt never hear a sermon, or the voice of a preacher more.

(7.) And now in this case recollect yourselves, what sins you have been formerly convinced of, under such a ministry, and which you have persisted in notwithstanding. Were you never convinced of your neglecting God, and living as without him in the world? of your low esteem and disregard of Christ? of your worldliness, your minding only the things of this earth? of your carnality, pride, self-seeking voluptuousness, your having been lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? of your unprofitableness in your station, wherein you ought to have lived more conformably to Christian rules and precepts, according to the relations wherein God hath set you? Were you never convinced how very faulty governors you have been, or members of families? parents or masters, children or servants? What will this come to at last, that convictions have hitherto signified and served for nothing but increase of guilt?

(8.) Under all this weight and load of guilt, con-

sider what you have to do for your souls! Bethink yourselves; are you to sit down and yield yourselves to perish? Consider, man, it is the business of thy soul, and of thine eternal state, that is now before thee. Thou hast the dreadful flaming gulf of everlasting horror and misery in view: hast thou nothing left thee to do but to throw thyself into it? Methinks thou shouldst sooner reconcile thy thoughts to any thing than that; and that, if any thing at all be to be done for thine escape, thou shouldst rather set thyself about it, and do it. Thou art yet alive, not yet in hell, yet the patience of God spares thee: thou hast yet time to consider, thou hast the power to think yet left thee, and canst thou use it no other way than to think of perishing! Think rather how not to perish. A great point is gained, if thou art but brought to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth imply thou dost both apprehend the distressedness of thy case, and art willing to do any thing that is to be done for thy relief. And if thou art brought to this, thy circumstance may perhaps be such that thou canst only put this question to thyself, and art only thyself to answer it, without a living, present guide, which may therefore make such a help as this needful to thee. Possibly some irresistible providence may have so cast thy lot, that thou art only now to be thy own preacher; though it sometime was otherwise with thee; and things were said to thee most suitable to the condition of thy soul, which thou wouldst not then consider. It is yet pressed upon thee to consider now, with some design to direct thy thoughts, that they run not into

useless and troublesome confusion only. And your subject being what course you are now to take, that you may escape eternal wrath and ruin; it is obvious to you to apprehend nothing is to be done against, or without God, but with him, and by him. Your utmost consideration can but bring the matter to this short point, that whereas you have highly offended the God that made you, incurred his wrath, and made him your enemy; either to resist, or treat and supplicate. That madness which would let you intend the former, is not capable of consideration at all. For, if you consider, will you contend with Omnipotency, or fight with an all-devouring flame? And as to the latter, it is well for you, that it can be the matter of your consideration, that you have any encouragement to turn your thoughts that way. You might have enemies, that being provoked, and having you in their power, would never admit of a treaty, nor regard your supplications, but fall upon you with merciless fury, and leave you nothing to think of but perishing. Here it is not so with you. The merciful God hath graciously told you fury is not so in him, but that (though if "briers and thorns will set themselves in battle against him, he will easily pass through, and burn them up together," yet) "if any will take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, they shall make peace with him." You are to consider there is danger in your case, and there is hope,—that your sin is not so little as to need no forgiveness, nor too great to be forgiven. Wherefore, whose case soever this is, since you may be forgiven, if you duly apply your-

selves, and must be forgiven, or you are undone, my further advice to you is, and you may, as to this, advise yourself, having nothing else left you to do.

(9.) That you cast yourselves down before the mercy-seat of God, humble yourselves deeply at his footstool, turn to him with all your soul, implore his mercy through Christ, make a solemn covenant with him, taking him to be your God, and devoting yourself to him, to be his, accepting his Son as your Lord and Saviour, and resigning your soul with submission and trust entirely to him, to be ruled and saved by him. That you are to do this the case is plain, and even speaks itself: how you are to do it may need to be more particularly told you.

1. Take heed that what you do in this be not the mere effect of your present apprehended distress, but of the altered judgment and inclination of your mind and heart. The apprehension of your distressed dangerous condition, may be a useful means and inducement to engage you more seriously to listen and attend to the proposals made to you in the gospel. But if, upon all this, it should be the sense of your heart that you would rather live still as without God in the world, and that you would never come to any such treaty or agreement with him, if mere necessity and the fear of perishing did not urge you to it, you are still but where you were. Therefore, though the feared danger was necessary to make you bethink yourself, and consider what God propounds to you; that consideration ought to have that further effect upon you, to convince you of the equity and desirableness of the things them-

selves which he propounds, summarily, of your betaking yourselves to him as your sovereign Lord, and supreme good, to fear and love, obey and enjoy him, in Christ Jesus, and accordingly ought to incline your heart thereto.

2. You are to consider, in your entering into this covenant with God in Christ, that it is not a transaction for the present only you are about, but for your whole life. "This God is to be your God, for ever and ever, your God and your guide even to the death." You are to live in his fear and love, in his service and communion all your days, and must understand this to be the meaning and tenor of the covenant which you make with him.

3. And hence, therefore, it is plain that your whole transaction in this matter must proceed from a new nature, and a new vital principle of grace and holiness in you. What you do herein will otherwise neither be sincere nor lasting. You can never embrace religion for itself, without this, nor continue on in a religious course. What you do only from a temporary pang or fear upon you, is but from a kind of force that is for the present upon you, and will come to nothing, as soon as the impression of that fear wears off. The religion which is true, and durable, is not from a spirit of fear, "but of love, power, and a sound mind." You must be a new creature, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works—that you may walk in them. The life of the new creature stands in love to God, as its way and course afterwards is a course of walking with God. If your heart be not brought to love

God, and delight in him, you are still but dead towards God, and you still remain alive unto sin, as before. Whereas, if you ever come to be a Christian indeed, you must be able truly to "reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ." Whereupon, in your making the mentioned covenant, you must "yield yourself to God, as one that is alive from the dead." A new nature and life in you, will make all that you do, in a way of duty, (whether immediately towards God or man, the whole course of godliness, righteousness, and sobriety,) easy and delightful to you. And because it is evident, both from many plain scriptures, and your own, and all men's experience, that you cannot be, yourselves, the authors of this holy new life and nature, you must therefore, further, in entering into this covenant,

4. Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit, by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God in Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord! how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion! Divine indeed in the institution, but merely human, in respect of the radication and exercise. In which respects also it must be divine or nothing. What, are we yet to learn that a divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as divine authority direct and enjoin it? Do all such scriptures go for nothing that tell us, "It is God that must create the new heart, and renew the right spirit in us;" that he must turn us if ever we be

turned; that we "can never come to Christ, except the Father draw us." Nor is there any cause of discouragement in this, if you consider what hath before been said in this discourse? "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone. But what if you be put to ask often, and wait long, this doth but the more endear the gift, and show the high value of it. You are to remember how often you have grieved, resisted, and vexed his Spirit, and that you have made God wait long upon you. What if the absolute sovereign Lord of all expect your attendance upon him? "He waits to be gracious;—and blessed are they that wait for him." Renew your applications to him. Lay from time to time that covenant before you, which yourselves must be wrought up unto a full entire closure with. And if it be not done at one time, try yet if it will another, and try again and again. Remember it is for your life, for your soul, for your all. But do not satisfy yourself with only such faint motions within thee, as may only be the effects of thy own spirit, of thy dark, dull, listless, sluggish, dead, hard heart, at least not of the efficacious regenerating influence of the divine Spirit. Didst thou never hear what mighty workings there have been in others when God hath been transforming and renewing them, and drawing them into living union with his Son, and himself through him? what an amazing penetrating light hath struck

into their hearts! "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Such as when he was making the world, enlightened the chaos: such as hath made them see things that concerned them as they truly were, and with their own proper face, God, and Christ, and themselves, sin and duty, heaven and hell, in their own true appearances! How effectually they have been awakened! how the terrors of the Almighty have beset and seized their souls! what agonies and pangs they have felt in themselves, when the voice of God hath said to them, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" How he hath brought them down at his feet, thrown them into the dust, broken them, melted them, made them abase themselves, loathe and abhor themselves, filled them with sorrow, shame, confusion, and with indignation towards their own guilty souls, habituated them to a severity, against themselves, unto the most sharp, and yet most unforced self-accusations, self-judging, and self-condemnation; so as even to make them lay claim to hell, and confess the portion of devils belonged to them, as their own most deserved portion. And if now their eyes have been directed towards a Redeemer, and any glimmering of hope hath appeared to them; if now they are taught to understand God saying to them, Sinner, art thou yet willing to be reconciled, and accept a Saviour? O the transport into which it puts them! this is life from the dead? What, is

there hope for such a lost wretch as I? How tasteful now is that melting invitation! how pleasant an intimation doth it carry with it, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If the Lord of heaven and earth do now look down from the throne of glory, and say, What, sinner, wilt thou despise my favour and pardon, my Son, thy mighty merciful Redeemer, my grace and Spirit still!—What can be the return of the poor abased wretch, overawed by the glory of the divine Majesty, stung with compunction, overcome with the intimation of kindness and love? "I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear, now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So inwardly is the truth of that word now felt, "that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." But, sinner, wilt thou make a covenant with me, and my Christ? wilt thou take me for thy God, and him for thy Redeemer and Lord? And may I, Lord! yet, may I? O admirable grace! wonderful sparing mercy! that I was not thrown into hell at my first refusal! Yea, Lord, with all my heart and soul, I renounce the vanities of an empty cheating world, and all the pleasures of sin: in thy favour stands my life: whom have I in heaven but thee? whom on earth do I desire besides thee? And O thou blessed Jesus, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in

thy blood, and whom the eternal God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, I fall before thee, my Lord, and my God; I here willingly tender my homage at the footstool of thy throne. I take thee for the Lord of my life. I absolutely surrender and resign myself to thee. Thy love constrains me henceforth no more to live to myself, but to thee who diedst for me, and didst rise again. And I subject and yield myself to thy blessed light and power, O Holy Spirit of grace, to be more and more illuminated, sanctified, and prepared for every good word and work, in this world, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified in the other. Sinner, never give thy soul leave to be at rest till thou find it brought to some such transaction with God (the Father, Son, and Spirit) as this; so as that thou canst truly say, and dost feel thy heart is in it. Be not weary or impatient of waiting and striving, till thou canst say, this is now the very sense of thy soul. Such things have been done in the world (but O how seldom of latter days!) So God hath wrought with men to save them from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for them. And why may he not yet be expected to do so? He hath smitten rocks ere now, and made the waters gush out; nor is his hand shortened, nor his ear heavy. Thy danger is not, sinner, that he will be inexorable, but lest thou shouldst. He will be entreated, if thou wouldst be prevailed with to entreat his favour with thy whole heart.

And that thou mayest, and not throw away thy

soul, and so great a hope, through mere sloth, and loathness to be at some pains for thy life; let the text, which hath been thy directory about the things that belong to thy peace, be also thy motive, as it gives thee to behold the Son of God weeping over such as would not know those things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee? O hard heart! Consider what these tears import to this purpose.

1. They signify the real depth, and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an intellectual and most comprehensive eye, that sees far, and pierces deep into things, hath a wide and large prospect; takes the compass of that forlorn state into which unreconcilable sinners are hastening, in all the horror of it. The Son of God did not weep vain and causeless tears, or for a light matter; nor did he for himself either spend his own, or desire the profusion of others' tears. "Weep not for me, O daughters of Jerusalem." He knows the value of souls, the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them; the severity of God's justice, and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects of them will be, when they finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe him that did, at least believe his tears.

2. They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. Canst thou think his tears deceitful? his, who never knew guile? was this like the rest of his course? And remember, that he who shed tears, did, from the same fountain of love and mercy, shed blood

too! Was that also done to deceive? Thou makest thyself some very considerable thing indeed, if thou thinkest the Son of God counted it worth his while to weep, and bleed, and die, to deceive thee into a false esteem of him and his love. But if it be the greatest madness imaginable to entertain any such thought, but that his tears were sincere and inartificial, the natural genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity, thou art then to consider what love and compassion thou art now sinning against; what bowels thou spurnest; and that if thou perishest, it is under such guilt as the devils themselves are not liable to, who never had a Redeemer bleeding for them, nor, that we ever find, weeping over them.

3. They show the remedilessness of thy case, if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. These tears will then be the last issues of (even defeated) love, of love that is frustrated of its kind design. Thou mayest perceive in these tears the steady unalterable laws of heaven, the inflexibleness of the divine justice, that holds thee in adamantine bonds, and hath sealed thee up, if thou prove incurably obstinate and impenitent, unto perdition; so that even the Redeemer himself, "he that is mighty to save," cannot at length save thee, but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame, which assuage it not; but (though they have another design, even to express true compassion) do yet unavoidably heighten, and increase the fervour of it, and will do so to all eternity. He even tells thee, sinner, Thou

hast despised my blood, thou shalt yet have my tears. That would have saved thee, these do only lament thee lost.

But the tears wept over others as lost and past hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case; if thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and "looking to him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over him," thou mayest assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls, did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless. Thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider further that,

4. They signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears, would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And that love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved? There his love is disappointed and vexed, crossed in its gracious intentions; but here, having compassed it, how will he joy over thee with singing, and rest in his love! And thou also, instead of being involved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of the Old Jerusalem, shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in eternal glory.

APPENDIX.

CONCERNING THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST; AND HOW GOD IS SAID TO WILL THE SALVATION OF THEM THAT PERISH.

BECAUSE some things, not fit to be wholly omitted, were as little fit to come into the body of a practical discourse, it was thought requisite to subjoin here the following additions, that will, severally, have reference to distinct parts of the foregoing discourse.

As to what was said, p. 104, of the unreasonableness, and ill consequence of admitting it to be any man's duty to believe himself utterly rejected, and forsaken of God, inasmuch as it would make that his duty which were repugnant to his felicity. This is to be evinced by a consideration, which also, even apart by itself, were not without its own great weight, namely, that such a belief were inconsistent with his former stated and known duty: it were therefore inconsistent with his felicity, inasmuch as it would make that duty impossible to be performed, which, before, was, by the constitution of the evangelical law, made necessary to it; namely, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The hope of acceptance is so necessary to both these, that the belief of a man's being finally rejected, or

that he shall never be accepted, cannot but make them both impossible, equally impossible, as if he were actually in hell; as much impossible to him, as to the devils themselves. Nor is this impossibility, merely, from a moral impotency, or that obduration of heart which were confessedly vicious, and his great sin, but from the natural influence of that belief of his being for ever rejected, which, upon the mentioned supposition, were his duty. Besides, inasmuch as it is the known duty of a sinner under the gospel, "to turn to God through Christ," and it is also declared in the same gospel, sufficiently to make it the common matter of faith to Christians, that none can "of themselves turn to God, and believe in his Son," without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon be a man's duty also to pray for that grace which may enable him hereto. How deep in wickedness was Simon Magus, even in the "gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity," when yet Peter calls him to repentance, and puts him upon praying for forgiveness, which must imply also his praying for the grace to repent; but how can a man pray for that, which, at the same time, he believes shall not be given him? yea, and which is harder, and more unaccountable, how can he stand obliged in duty, to pray for that, which, at the same time, he stands obliged in duty to believe he shall not obtain? How can these two contrary obligations lie upon a man at the same time; or is he to look upon the former as ceased? should he reckon the gospel as to him repealed? or his impenitency and infidelity, even when they are at the highest, no sins?

I know it is obvious to object, as to all this, the case of the "unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost;" which will be supposed to be stated and determined in the sacred Scriptures, and being so, the person that hath committed it, may equally be thought obliged, (by a mixed assent, partly of faith to what is written, partly of self-knowledge, which he ought to have of his own acts and state,) to conclude himself guilty of it: whereupon all the former inconvenience and difficulty will be liable to be urged as above. But even as to this also, I see not but it may fitly enough be said, that though the general nature of that sin be stated, and sufficiently determined *in thesi*, yet that God hath not left it determinable in *hypothesi*, by any particular person, that he hath committed it. For admit that it generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost, by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly and certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted, none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought, as by speech. I also doubt not but it will be acknowledged on all hands, that prejudice and malice against Christianity, must have a great ingrediency into this sin; not such malice as whereby, knowing it to be true religion, a man hates and detests it as such, (which would suppose these Pharisees, whom our Saviour charges with it, or cautions against it, to have been, at that time, in their judgments and consciences, Christians,)

but such malignity, and strong prejudice as darkens and obstructs his mind, that he judges it not to be true, against the highest evidence of its being so: It will also be acknowledged, that some enmity and disaffection to true religion, is common to all men; more especially in their unregeneracy, and unconverted state.

Now let it be supposed that some person or other, of a very unwarrantably sceptical genius, had opportunity to know certainly the matter of fact, touching the miraculous works wrought by our Saviour, and understood withal somewhat generally of the doctrine which he taught; and that he sets himself as a philosopher, to consider the case. Suppose that, partly through prejudice against the holy design of Christianity, whereof there is some degree in all; and partly through shortness of discourse, not having thoroughly considered the matter, he thinks it possible that some demon or other, with design, under a specious pretence, to impose upon, or amuse the credulous vulgar, may have done all those strange things. Suppose his judgment should for the present more incline this way. What, if thinking this to be the case in the instance of Apollonius Tyanæus, he hath not yet, upon a slighter view, discerned enough to distinguish them, but thinks alike of both cases? Yea, and suppose he have spoken his sentiments to some other; perhaps, upon further inquiry and search, he might see cause to alter his judgment. And now, setting himself to inquire more narrowly, he perceives the unexceptionable excellent scope and tendency of our Saviour's

doctrine and precepts, considers the simplicity and purity of his life, contemplates further the awful greatness of his mighty works; but amidst these his deliberations, he finds among the rest of Christian constitutions this severe one, "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come,"—and begins to fear lest, supposing the truth of this excellent religion, he have precluded himself of all the advantages of it by that former judgment of his: What is he to do in this case? what were he to be advised unto? What, to pass judgment upon himself, and his case as desperate? or not rather to humble himself before the God of heaven, ask pardon for his injurious rash judgment, and supplicate for mercy, and for further illumination, "in the mystery of God, of the Father, and of Christ?" Which course, that it may have a blessed issue with him, who dare venture to deny or doubt? And what have we to say hereupon, but that in great wisdom and mercy, our Saviour hath only told us there is such a sin, and what the general nature of it is, or whereabouts it lies: but the judgment of particular cases wherein, or of the very pitch and degree of malignity wherewith it is committed, he hath reserved to himself; intending further to strive with persons by his Spirit, while he judges them yet with-

in the reach of mercy, or withhold it, when he sees any to have arrived to that calumniating pitch of malignity, and obstinacy, wherein he shall judge this sin specially to consist? And what inconvenience is it to suppose he hath left this matter, touching the degree, humanly undeterminable. The knowledge of it can do them who have committed it no good: and probably they have by it so blinded and stupified their own souls, as to have made themselves very little capable of apprehending that they have committed it, or of considering whether they have or not. But they are sunk into a deep abyss of darkness and death, so as that such knowledge may be as little possible, as it would be useful to them. All their faculties of intellection, consideration, and self-reflection, being, as to any such exercise, bound up in a stupifying dead sleep.

And to what purpose should they have a rule by which to determine a case, who, 1. Can receive no benefit by the determination, and, 2. Who are supposed, when they are to use it, to have no faculty sufficiently apt to make this sad, but true judgment of their case by it? But for them who have not committed it, and who are, consequently, yet capable of benefit by what should be made known about it, there is, therefore, enough made known for their real use and benefit. It will,

1. Be of real use to many such, to know their danger of running into it. And it is sufficient to that purpose, that they are plainly told wherein the general nature of it consists, or whereabouts it lies; without showing them the very point that

hath certain death in it; or letting them know just how near they may approach it, without being sure to perish, when there is danger enough in every step they take towards it. As if there were some horrid desert, into any part whereof no man hath any business to come, but in some part whereof there is a dreadful gulf, whence arises a contagious vapour, which, if he come within the verge of it, will be certainly poisonous and mortal to him. What need is there that any man should know just how near he may come, without being sure to die for it? He is concerned to keep himself at a cautious awful distance.

2. It may be of great use to others, that are afflicted with very torturing fears, lest they have committed it, to know that they have not. And they have enough also to satisfy them in the case. For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of divine favour, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God, and making their peace: they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that fearful guilt; and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them. For since we are not "sufficient to think any thing (that good is) of ourselves," it is much more reasonable to ascribe any such thoughts or agitations of spirit, that have this design, to him, than to ourselves, and to account that he is yet at work with us, (at least in the way of common grace,) though when our thoughts

drive towards a conclusion against ourselves, that we have committed that sin, and towards despair thereupon, we are to apprehend a mixture of temptation in them, which we are concerned earnestly to watch and pray against. And yet even such temptation is an argument of such-a-one's not having committed that sin. For such as the devil may apprehend more likely to have committed it, (and it is not to be thought he can be sure who have,) he will be less apt to trouble with such thoughts, not knowing what the issue of that unquietness may prove, and apprehending it may occasion their escaping quite out of his snares. And I do conceive this to be a safer method of satisfying such as are perplexed with this fear in our days, than to be positive in stating that sin so, or limiting it to such circumstances, as shall make it impossible to be committed in this age of the world. For let it be seriously considered, whether it be altogether an unsupposable thing, that, with some in our days, there may be an equivalency, in point of light and evidence of the truth of Christianity, unto what these Jews had, whom our Saviour warns of the danger of this sin, at that time when he so warned them; his warning and cautioning them about it, implies that he judged them, at least in a possibility, at that time, of incurring the guilt of it: if the text Matt. xii. do not also imply that he reckoned them, then, actually to have committed it. For, it is said, verse 25, he "knew their thoughts," that is, considered the temper of their minds, and thereupon said to them that which follows concerning it. Let us consider wherein their advantage

towards their being ascertained of the truth of the Christian religion, was greater than we now can have: it was, chiefly, in this respect greater, that they had a nearer, and more immediate knowledge of the matter of fact, wherein that evidence which our Saviour refers to did consist. A more immediate way of knowing it they had; the most immediate the persons whom he warns, or charges, seem not to have had. For those Pharisees, it is said, heard of the cure of the demoniac, not that they saw it. They took it upon the, no doubt sufficiently credible, report of others. Now let it be further considered, what we have to balance this one single advantage. We have, to intelligent considering persons, rationally sufficient evidence of the same matter of fact. But how great things, that have since followed, have we the sufficiently certain knowledge of besides, beyond what they had in view, at that time: as, the wonderful death of our Lord, exactly according to prediction, in many respects, together with all the unforetold amazing circumstances that attended it! —his more wonderful resurrection, upon which so great a stress is laid for demonstrating the truth of the religion he taught—the destruction of Jerusalem, as he foretold, and the shattered condition of the Jewish nation, as was also foretold, ever since—the strange success of the gospel in the first, and some following ages, by so unlikely means, against the greatest opposition imaginable, both of Jews and Pagans. Not to insist on the apostacy foretold in the Christian church, with many more things that might be mentioned, let it be considered whether the want

of a so immediate way of knowing some of these things, be not abundantly compensated by the greatness of the other things that are however sufficiently known. And if such as have wit and leisure to consider these things in our days, are often pressed to consider them, have them frequently represented, and laid before their eyes, if such, I say, have in view as great evidence, upon the whole, of the truth of Christianity, as these Pharisees had; it is then further to be considered, whether it be not possible that some such may equal the Jewish malice, against the holy design of our religion. To which I only say, the Lord grant that none may. But if there be really cause to apprehend such a danger, some other way should be thought of to cure the trouble of some, than by the danger, and too probable ruin of others.

However, none should themselves make their own case incurable, by concluding that they have sinned that sin, or by believing they are, otherwise, forsaken and rejected of God; so as that he will never more assist their endeavours to repent, and turn to him through the Mediator.

If it be inquired here, Since, as hath been shown, some may be quite forsaken of God, while yet they live in the world; ought such to believe then they are not forsaken, and so believe an untruth that they may make it true, or try if they can better their condition by it? I answer, nor that neither. For that God will further assist an obstinate sinner, that hath long resisted his Spirit, and despised his mercy, is no matter of promise to him, and so no matter of

faith. When he doth conquer, at length, any such, it is of mere unpromised favour (as was also shown); whereof therefore he gives others no ground to despair; and for which they are deeply concerned, with great earnestness to supplicate. But if it be said, How can they pray for that whereof they have no promise, and can have no faith, since "what is not of faith is sin?" Rom. xiv. 23. I answer, that passage of Scripture would, in this case, be much misapplied. It speaks not of faith concerning the certainty of any event to be expected, but the lawfulness of a work to be done, and of doubting, not concerning the event, but my own act. Can any man in his wits doubt concerning his own act in this case? whether it be better to pray for the grace of God to save him, than slight it and perish? Nor are they without very encouraging promises concerning the event, "that God will be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," and "that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" which promises, it is true, the context of both shows, do speak of believing prayer. They are to faith, not of it, and import, that God will reward and save the believer: not that he will give faith to the obstinate contemptuous unbeliever. If he do this, it is, as was said, of unpromised bounty. But though they are not promises to give faith, they should induce it; and incline sinners to cast themselves down before the throne of so gracious a God, and seek grace to help them in their need, in confidence that he will never reject penitent believing prayer. They, indeed, that for their former wilful sinning, are utterly forsaken of God, will

not thus apply themselves; but our question is not what they will do, but what they should. Because they would not, therefore they were forsaken, and because they yet will not, they are still, and finally forsaken. Their refusal proceeds not from any discouragement God hath given them, but from the malignity of their own hearts. God hath not repealed his gospel towards them. The connection continues firm between the preceptive and promissory parts of it. Their infidelity is not become their duty, but remains their heinous sin, and the more deeply heinous by how much their own malignity holds them more strongly in it.

Unto what also is discoursed, p. 117, concerning anger and grief, (or other passions,) ascribed to God, it will not be unfit here to add, that unless they be allowed to signify real aversion of will, no account is to be given what reality in him they can signify at all. For to say (what some do seem to satisfy themselves with) that they are to be understood according to the effects, not according to the affections, though true as to the negative part, is, as to the affirmative, very defective and short; for the effects of anger and grief, upon which those names are put, when spoken of God, are not themselves in him, but in us. But we are still at a loss what they signify in him. Such effects must have some cause. And if they be effects which he works, they must have some cause in himself that is before them, and productive of them. This account leaves us to seek what that cause is, that is signified by these names. That it cannot be any passion, as the same names are wont to sig-

nify with us, is out of question. Nor indeed do those names primarily, and most properly signify passion in ourselves. The passion is consequent only, by reason of that inferior nature in us, which is susceptible of it. But the aversion of our mind and will is before it, and, in another subject, very separable from it, and possible to be without it. In the blessed God we cannot understand any thing less is signified than real displacency at the things whereat he is said to be angry or grieved.

Our shallow reason indeed is apt to suggest in these matters, why is not that prevented that is so displeasing? And it would be said, with equal reason, in reference to all sin permitted to be in the world, why was it not prevented? And what is to be said to this? shall it be said that sin doth not displease God? that he hath no will against sin? it is not repugnant to his will? Yes: it is to his revealed will, to his law. But is that an untrue revelation? His law is not his will itself, but the sign, the discovery of his will. Now, is it an insignificant sign? a sign that signifies nothing? or to which there belongs no correspondent signification? nothing that is signified by it? Is that which is signified (for sure no one will say it signifies nothing) his real will, yea or no? Who can deny it? that will, then, (and a most calm, sedate impassionate will it must be understood to be,) sin, and consequently the consequent miseries of his creatures, are repugnant unto. And what will is that? it is not a peremptory will concerning the event, for the event falls out otherwise; which were, upon that

supposition, impossible: "For who hath resisted his will?" as was truly intimated by the personated questionist, Romans ix. 19. but impertinently, when God's will of another (not a contrary) kind, that is, concerning another object, was in the same breath referred unto, "why doth he yet find fault?" It is not the will of the event that is the measure of faultiness; for then there could not have been sin in the world, nor consequently misery, which only, by the Creator's pleasure, stands connected with it. For nothing could fall out against that irresistible will. The objector then destroys his own objection, so absurdly, and so manifestly, as not to deserve any other reply than that which he meets with. "Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

And what is the other object about which the divine will is also conversant? matter of duty; and what stands in connexion with it, not abstractly and separately, but as it is so connected? our felicity. This is objectively another will, as we justly distinguish divine acts, that respect the creature, by their different objects. Against this will falls out all the sin and misery in the world.

All this seems plain and clear, but is not enough. For it may be further said, that when God wills this or that to be my duty, doth he not will this event, namely, my doing it? otherwise wherein is his will withstood, or not fulfilled in my not doing it? He willed this to be my duty, and it is so. I do not, nor can hinder it from being so, yet I do it not, and that he willed not. If all that his will meant was,

that this should be my duty, but my doing it was not intended; his will is entirely accomplished: it hath its full effect, in that such things are constituted, and do remain my duty, upon his signification of this his will; my not doing it, not being within the compass of the object, or the thing willed.

If it be said, he willed my doing it, that is, that I should do it, not that I shall, the same answer will recur, namely, that his will hath still its full effect, this effect still remaining, that I should do it, but that I shall he willed not.

It may be said, I do plainly go against his will however; for his will was that I should do so, or so, and I do not what he willed I should. It is true, I go herein against his will, if he willed not only my obligation, but my action according to it. And indeed it seems altogether unreasonable, and unintelligible, that he should will to oblige me to that, which he doth not will me to do.

Therefore it seems out of question, that the holy God doth constantly and perpetually, in a true sense, will the universal obedience, and the consequent felicity of all his creatures capable thereof. He doth will it with simple complacency, as what were highly grateful to him, simply considered by itself. Who can doubt, but that purity, holiness, blessedness, wheresoever they were to be beheld among his creatures, would be a pleasing and delightful spectacle to him, being most agreeable to the perfect excellency, purity, and benignity of his own nature, and that their deformity and misery must be consequently unpleasing? But he doth not efficaciously

will every thing that he truly wills. He never willed the obedience of all his intelligent creatures, so as effectually to make them all obey, nor their happiness, so as to make them all be happy, as the event shows. Nothing can be more certain, than that he did not so will these things; for then nothing could have fallen out to the contrary, as we see much hath. Nor is it at all unworthy the love and goodness of his nature not so to have willed, with that effective will, the universal sinlessness, and felicity of all his intelligent creatures. The divine nature must comprehend all excellences in itself, and is not to be limited to that one only of benignity, or an aptness to acts of beneficence. For then it were not infinite, not absolutely perfect, and so not divine. All the acts of his will must be consequently conform and agreeable to the most perfect wisdom. "He doth all things according to the counsel of his will." He wills, it is true, the rectitude of our actions, and what would be consequent thereto, but he first, and more principally wills the rectitude of his own. And not only not to do an unrighteous, but not an inept or unfit thing. We find he did not think it fit efficaciously to provide concerning all men, that they should be made obedient and happy, as he hath concerning some. That in the general he makes a difference, is to be attributed to his wisdom, that is, his wisdom hath in the general made this determination, not to deal with all alike, and so we find it ascribed to his wisdom that he doth make a difference. And in what a transport is the holy Apostle in the contemplation and

celebration of it upon this account! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But now, when in particular he comes to make this difference between one person, and another, there being no reason in the object to determine him this way, more than that, his designing some for the objects of special favour, and waving others (as to such special favour) when all were in themselves alike; in that case wisdom hath not so proper an exercise, but it is the work of free, unobliged sovereignty here to make the choice: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Yet, in the mean time, while God doth not efficaciously will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, doth it follow he wills it not really at all? To say he wills it efficaciously, were to contradict experience, and his word: to say he wills it not really, were equally to contradict his word. He doth will it, but not primarily, and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it, namely, that he so overpower all, as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation, why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeably to the reasonableness and fitness of them.

ON

SELF-DEDICATION.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN, EARL OF KILDARE,

BARON OF OPHALIA,

FIRST OF HIS ORDER IN THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND.

MY LORD,

I LITTLE thought when, in so private a way, I lately offered much of the following Discourse to your Lordship's ear, I should receive the command (which I am not now, so far as it proves to me a possible one, to disobey or further to dispute) of exposing it thus to the view of the world, or so much as to present it to your Lordship's own eye. It was indeed impossible to me to give an exact account of what was then discoursed, from a memory that was so treacherous, as to let slip many things that were prepared and intended to have been said that day; and that could much less (being assisted but by very imperfect memorials) recollect every thing that was said, several days after. Yet I account, upon the whole, it is much more varied by enlargement, than by diminution; whereby, I hope, it will be nothing less capable of serving the end of this enjoined pub-

lication of it. And I cannot doubt but the injunction proceeded from the same pious gratitude to the God of your life, which hath prompted, for several years past, to the observation of that domestic annual solemnity, in memory of your great preservation from so near a death.* That the remembrance of so great a mercy might be the more deeply impressed with yourself, and improved also (so far as this means could signify for that purpose) to the instruction of many others.

Your Lordship was pleased to allow an hour to the hearing of that Discourse. What was proposed to you in it, is to be the business of your life. And what is to be done continually, is once to be thoroughly done. The impression ought to be very inward, and strong, which must be so lasting as to govern a man's life. And were it as fully done as mortality can admit, it needs be more solemnly renewed at set times for that purpose. And indeed, that such a day should not pass you without a fall, nor that fall be without a hurt, and that hurt proceed unto a wound, and that wound not to be mortal, but even next to it, looks like an artifice and contrivance of providence to show you how near it could go, without cutting through that slender thread of life, that it might endear to you its accurate superintendency over your life, that there might here be a remarkable juncture in that thread, and that whensoever such a day should revolve in the circle of your year, it might come again, and again,

* By a fall from a horse, December 5, 1674.

with a note upon it under your eye, and appear ever to you as another birth-day, or as an earlier day of resurrection.

Whereupon, my honoured Lord, the further design of that providence is to be thoroughly studied, and pondered deeply. For it shows itself to be, at once, both merciful and wise, and as upon the one account it belonged to it to design kindly to you, so, upon the other, to form its design aptly, and so as that its means and method might fitly both serve and signify its end. If therefore your Lordship shall be induced to reckon the counsel acceptable which hath been given you upon this occasion, and to think the offering yourself to God, a living sacrifice, under the endearing obligation of so great a mercy is, indeed, a reasonable service; your life by that dedication acquires a sacredness, becomes a holy, divine life. And so by one and the same means is not only renewed and prolonged in the same kind of natural life, but is also heightened and improved to a nobler and far more excellent kind. And thus, out of that umbrage only and shadow of death, which sat upon one day of your time, springs a double birth and resurrection to you. Whereby (as our apostle speaks in another place of this epistle) you come to yield yourselves to God, as one alive from the dead.

So your new year (which shortly after begins) will always be to you a fresh setting forth in that new and holy course of life, which shall at length (and God grant it to be, after the revolution of many fruitful years, wherein you may continue a

public blessing in this wretched world) end, and be perfected in a state of life not measured by time, wherein you are to be ever with the Lord. Which will answer the design of that merciful providence towards you; and of this performance, how mean soever, of

Your Honour's most obedient,

Humble Servant,

JOHN HOWE.

ON

SELF-DEDICATION.

ROMANS XII. 1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Two things are more especially considerable in these words:—The matter of the exhortation, that we would "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service." And the pathetic form of obtestation that is used to enforce it: "I beseech you by the mercies of God." The former I intend for the principal suspect of the following Discourse, and shall only make use of the other for the purpose unto which the holy apostle doth here apply it. Our business therefore must be, to show the import of this exhortation. In the doing whereof we shall—Explain the terms wherein the text delivers it. And—Declare more distinctly the nature of the thing expressed by them.

I. We shall explain the terms which the text employs in this exhortation.

By "bodies," we are to understand our whole selves, expressed here (synecdochically) by the name of bodies, for distinction's sake. It having been wont heretofore, to offer in sacrifice the bodies of beasts, the apostle lets them know they are now to offer up their own: meaning yet their whole man, as some of these following words do intimate; and agreeably to the plain meaning of the exhortation: "Glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."

"Sacrifice" is not to be understood in this place in a more restrained sense, than as it may signify whatsoever is by God's own appointment dedicated to himself. According to the stricter notion of a sacrifice, its more noted general distinction (though the Jewish be variously distributed*) is into propitiatory and gratulatory or eucharistical. Christianity in that strict sense, admits but one, and that of the former sort. By which one (that of himself) our Lord hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We ourselves, or any service of ours, are only capable of being sacrifices by way of analogy, and that chiefly to the other sort. And so all sincere Christians are "as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," being both temple, priests, and sacrifices, all at once; as our Lord himself, in his peculiar sacrificing, also was.

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* See Sigonius de Repub. Heb. Dr. Outr. de Sacr.

In the addition of "living," the design is carried on of speaking both by way of allusion and opposition to the ritual sacrificing. By way of allusion. For any thing dead of itself, the Israelites were not to eat themselves, because they were a holy people; (though they might give it to a stranger;) much more had it been detestable, as a sacrifice to God. The beast must be brought alive to the altar. Whereas then we are also to offer our bodies, a living sacrifice, so far there must be an agreement. Yet also, a difference seems not obscurely suggested. The victim brought alive to be sacrificed, was yet to be slain in sacrificing: but here, living may also signify continuing to live. You, as if he should say, may be sacrifices, and yet live on. According to the strict notion we find given of a sacrifice, it is somewhat to be in the prescribed way destroyed, and that must perish in token of their entire devotedness to God who offer it. When we offer ourselves,* life will not be touched by it or at all impaired, but improved and ennobled highly by having a sacredness added to it. Your bodies are to be offered a sacrifice, but an unbloody one. Such as you have no cause to be startled at, it carries no dread with it, life will be still whole in you. Which shows by the way, it is not an inanimate body, without the soul. But the bodily life is but alluded to and supposed, it is a higher and more excellent one that is meant; the spiritual, divine life, as chapter vi. 13. "Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive

* Cloppenburg. Schol. Sacrific. and others.

from the dead." And verse 11. shows what that being alive means, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Alive by a life which means God, which aims at him, terminates in him, and is derived to you through Christ. As he also says, "I am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

"Holy," though it be included in the word sacrifice, is not in the Greek θυσία, and was therefore added without verbal tautology. And there were, however, no real one. For there is a holiness that stands in an entire rectitude of heart and life, by which we are conformed in both, to the nature and will of God, besides the relative one which redounds upon any person or thing by due dedication to him. And which former is pre-required, in the present sacrifice, that it may be, as it follows,

"Acceptable to God," not as though thereby it became acceptable, but as that without which it is not so. Yet also holiness, in the nature of the thing, cannot but be grateful to God or well-pleasing, (as the word here used signifies, εὐάρεστον,) but not so as to reconcile a person to him, who was before a sinner, and hath still sin in him. But supposing the state of such a person first made and continued good, that resemblance of himself cannot but be pleasing in the eyes of God, but fundamentally and statedly in and for Christ. This therefore sig-

nifies, both how ready God is to be well pleased with such a sacrifice, and also signifies the quality of the sacrifice itself, that it is apt to please.

" Reasonable service," or worship, as the word signifies. This also is spoken accommodately, to the notion given before of offering ourselves, in opposition to the former victims wherein beasts were the matter of the sacrifice. Those were brute sacrifices. You are to offer reasonable ones. And it signifies our minds and understandings the seat of reason, with our wills and affections that are to be governed by it, must all be ingredient as the matter of that sacrifice; implying also the right God hath in us, whence nothing can be more reasonable than to offer ourselves to him.

" Present," that is, dedicate, devote yourselves, set yourselves before God, as they present at the altar, the destined sacrifices, make them stand ready for immolation. You are so to make a tender of yourselves, as if you would say, " Lord, here I am, wholly thine. I come to surrender myself, my whole life and being, to be entirely and always at thy disposal, and for thy use. Accept a devoted, self-resigning soul!" Thus we are brought to the thing itself. Which now,

II. In the next place, with less regard to the allusive terms, we come more distinctly to open and explain. It is briefly but the dedicating of ourselves: or, as it is 2 Cor. viii. 5. the giving our ownselves to the Lord. So those Macedonian converts are said to have done. And there is a special notice to be taken therein of the word first, which puts a remark-

ableness upon that passage. The apostle is commending their liberal charity towards indigent necessitous Christians: and shows how their charity was begun in piety. They did not only, most freely give away their substance for the relief of such as were in want, but first gave their ownselves to the Lord.

But that we may not misconceive the nature of this act, of giving ourselves, we must know it is not donation in the strict and proper sense, such as confers a right upon the donee, or to him to whom a thing is said to be given. We cannot be said to collate, or transfer a right to him, who is before the only proprietor and supreme Lord of all. It is more properly but a tradition, a surrender or delivery of ourselves, upon the supposal and acknowledgment of his former right; or the putting ourselves into his possession, for his appointed uses and services, out of which we had injuriously kept ourselves before. It is but giving him his own: "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." It is only a consent and obedience to his most rightful claim, and demand of us, or a yielding ourselves to him, as it is significantly expressed in the mentioned Rom. vi. 13. Though there the word is the same with that in the text, παρίστημι, or παριστάνω, which here we read "present."

And now, that we may more distinctly open the nature of this self-dedication, we shall show what ought to accompany and qualify it, that we may be a suitable and grateful present to him, in evangelical

acceptation, worthy of God, such as he requires and will accept.

1. It must be done with knowledge and understanding. It cannot but be an intelligent act. It is an act of religion and worship, as it is called in the text. Service we read it, which is much more general, but the word is λατρεία, "worship." It is indeed the first and fundamental act of worship. And it is required to be a rational act; "your reasonable service." Religion cannot move blindfold. And though knowledge and reason are not throughout words of the same signification and latitude; yet the former is partly presupposed upon the latter, and partly improved by it, nor can therefore be severed from it. In the present case, it is especially necessary that we distinctly know and apprehend the state of things between God and us: that we understand ourselves to have been with the rest of men, in an apostacy, and revolt from God, that we are recalled unto him, that a Mediator is appointed on purpose, through whom we are to approach to him, and render ourselves back unto him: that so this may be our sense in our return, "Lord, I have here brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature, mine own-self. I have heard what the Redeemer, of thy own constituting, hath done and suffered for the reconciling and reducing of such, and, against thy known designs, I can no longer withhold myself."

2. With serious consideration. It must be a deliberate act. How many understand matters of greatest importance, which they never consider, and perish by not considering what they know! Consi-

deration is nothing else but the revolving of what we knew before: the actuating the habitual knowledge we had of things: a more distinct reviewing of our former notices belonging to any case, a recollecting and gathering them up, a comparing them together; and, for such as appear more momentous, a repeating, and inculcating them upon ourselves, that we may be urged on to suitable action. And this, though of itself without the power and influence of the Divine Spirit, is not sufficient, yet being the means he works by, is most necessary to our becoming Christians, that is, if we speak of becoming so, not by fate or by chance, as too many only are, but by our own choice and design: which is the same thing with dedicating ourselves to God through Christ, whereof we are discoursing. For upon our having thus considered and comprehended the whole compass of the case in our thoughts, either the temper of our hearts would be such that we would hereupon dedicate ourselves, or we would not; if we would, it is because we should judge the arguments for it more weighty than the objections, which, without such pondering of both, we are not likely to apprehend, and so, for want of this consideration, are never likely to become Christians at all. Or, if we would not, it is because to the more carnal temper of our hearts, the objections would outweigh. And then, if we do seem to consent, it is because what is to be objected came not in view: and so we should be Christians to no purpose. Our contract with the Redeemer were void in the making, we should only seem pleased with the terms of

Christianity, because we have not digested them in our thoughts. So our act undoes itself in the very doing. It carries an implicit, virtual repentance in it, of what is done. We enter ourselves Christians, upon surprise or mistake. And if we had considered what we are, consequently, to do, what to forbear, what to forego, what to endure, would not have done it. And, therefore, when we do come distinctly to apprehend all this, are like actually to repent and revolt. As they, John vi. who, while they understood not what it was to be a Christian, seemed very forward followers of Christ. But when they did more fully understand it, upon his telling them plainly, went back and walked no more with him. And he lets them go; as if he should say, "Mend yourselves if you can; see where you can get a better master."

3. With a determinate judgment, at length, that this ought to be done. There are two extremes in this matter. Some will not consider at all, and so not do this thing; and some will consider always, and so never do it. Stand, Shall I? Shall I? Halt between two opinions. These are, both of them, very vicious and faulty extremes in reference to the management even of secular affairs, both of them contrary to that prudence which should govern our actions, that is, when men will never consider what is necessary to be done, and so neglect their most important concernments; or, when they will never have done considering, which is the same thing, as if they had never taken up any thought of the matter at all. Indeed, in the present case, it is a re-

proach to the blessed God to consider longer, than till we have well digested the state of the case. As if it were difficult to determine the matter, between him and the devil, which were the better, or more rightful Lord! We must at last be at a point, and come to a judicious determination of the question, as those sincerely resolved Christians had done, who also express the reasons that had, before that time no doubt, determined them: "Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

4. With liberty of spirit, having thrown off all former bonds, and quite disengaged ourselves from other masters. As they speak, "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." For our Saviour expressly tells us, "No man can serve two masters." When those *Dedititii*, the people of Collatia, (Livius l. 1.) were about the business of capitulating in order to the surrender of themselves, the question put, on the Romans' part, was, "Are the Collatine people in their own power?" Wherein satisfaction being given, the matter is concluded. In the present case of yielding ourselves to God, the question cannot be concerning any previous tie in point of right, or that could urge conscience. There cannot be so much as a plausible pretender against him. But there must be a liberty, in opposition to the pre-engaged inclinations and affections. And this must be the sense of the sincere soul, entreating the matter of its self-surrender, and dedica-

tion, with the great God, to be able to say to the question, Art thou under no former contrary bonds? "Lord, I am under none, I know, that ought to bind me, or that justly can, against thy former sovereign right. I had indeed suffered other bonds to take place in my heart, and the affections of my soul, but they were bonds of iniquity, which I scruple not to break, and repent that ever I made; I took myself indeed to be my own, and have lived to myself, only pleased, and served and sought myself, as if I were created and born for no other purpose, and if the sense of my heart had been put into words, there was insolence enough to have conceived such as these; not my tongue only, but my whole man, body and soul, all my parts and powers, my estate and name, and strength, and time, are all my own: who is Lord over me? And while I pleased myself with such an imagined liberty and self-dominion, no idol was too despicable to command my homage. I have done worse than prostrated my body to a stock, my soul hath humbled itself, and bowed down to a clod of clay. My thoughts and desires, and hopes and joys, have all stooped to so mean trifles, as wealth, or ease, or pleasure, or fame, all but so many fragments of earth, or, the less consistent, vapours sprung from it. And whereas this world is nothing else but a bundle of lusts, none of them was too base to rule me. And while I thought myself at liberty, I have been a servant to corruption. But now Lord I have through thy mercy learned to abandon and abhor myself. Thy grace appearing, hath taught me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

Thou hast overcome; enjoy thine own conquest. I am grieved for it, and repent from my soul that ever I did put thee to contend for, and conquer thine own." And so doth this self-dedication carry in it repentance from dead works, and towards God.

5. With a plenary full bent of heart and will. As that, "I have sworn, and will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Or, that, "I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes always unto the end." And herein doth this self-dedication more principally consist, namely, in a resolved willingness to yield myself, as God's own property, to be for him and not for another. Which resolvedness of will, though it may in several respects admit of several names, or be clothed with distinct notions, is but one and the same substantial act. It may be called, in respect of the competition which there was in the case, choice: or in respect of the proposal made to me of such a thing to be done, consent. But these are, abstracting from these references, the same act, which, in itself considered, is only a resolute volition. "I will be the Lord's." Which resolution, if one do, whether mentally or vocally, direct to God or Christ, then it puts on the nature of a vow; and so is fitly called devoting one's self.

It carries in it, as a thing supposed, the implanted divine life and nature, whereby we are truly said "to present ourselves living sacrifices," as in the text, or as it is expressed in that other place, chap. vi. 13. To "yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead;" as verse 11. "alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord." Which life is

not to be understood simply, but in a certain respect. For before we were not dead simply, we were not dead, disinclined, or disaffected to every thing, but peculiarly towards God and his Christ. That way we were without any inclination, motion, tendency, or disposition. And so were dead as to this thing, or in this respect: were alienated from the life of God. Now we come to live this life, and are made by his grace to incline and move towards him, of our own accord. Dead things, or destitute of life, may be moved by another, are capable of being moved violently, without, or against inclination, hither or thither. But a living creature can spontaneously move itself, as of its own accord it inclines.

And whereas there are two more noble principles, that belong to this divine life and nature, faith and love. A great and noted pair, as may be seen in divers places of the New Testament. These have both an ingrediency into this self-dedication. The nature of each of them runs into it, and may be perceived in it. And it is hereupon a mixed act, partaking an influence and tincture, as it were, from the one and the other of them.

Faith respects the promises of God, and what we are thereupon to expect from him. And so our dedicating ourselves to God, is a self-committing. We give up ourselves to him as a trust, as the apostle's emphatical expression intimates, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he will keep that which I have committed unto him," παραϰαταθήϰην μου, my pawn or pledge, my

fidei commissum against that day. The soul flies to God as in a distress, not knowing to be safe another way. As once a people, not able to obtain tutelage on other terms, surrendered themselves to them whose help they sought, with some such expression, "If not as ours, yet at least as your own, save, protect, and defend us." Nor, in our surrendering ourselves to God, is this any way unsuitable either to us or to him. Not to us; for we are really distressed, ready to perish; it is agreeable to the state of our case. Not to him; for it is glorious to him; a thing worthy of God to be a refuge, and sanctuary to perishing souls; and is thereupon a pleasant thing, a godlike pleasure, suitable to a self-sufficient, and all-sufficient Being, who hath enough for himself and for all others, whom he shall have taught not to despise the riches of his goodness. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and them that hope in his mercy." He waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted in showing mercy. He lifts up himself when he does it, and waits that he may; expects the opportunity, seeks out meet and suitable objects, (as with thirst and appetite, an enterprising, valiant man is wont to do encounters, for none were ever so intent to destroy, as he is to save,) yea, makes them, prepares them for his purpose. Which he doth not, and needs not do, in point of misery, so they can enough prepare themselves; but in point of humility, sense of their necessity and unworthiness, great need, and no desert, nor disposition to supplicate. These are needful preparations, make it de-

corous and comely to him to show mercy. A God is to be sought, with humble, prostrate veneration. And such an opportunity he waits for. It is not fit for him; not great, not majestic, to throw away his mercies upon insolent and insensible wretches: for, as there it follows, he is the God of judgment, a most accurate, judicious wisdom and prudence conducts and guides all the emanations of his flowing goodness. The part of which wisdom and judgment is to nick the opportunity, to take the fit season when mercy will be most fitly placed; best attain its end; relish best; be most acceptable to them that shall receive it, and honourable to him that shows it. And, therefore, as is added, "blessed are they that wait for him," that labour to be in a posture to meet him on his own terms and in his own way.

Let such as have a mind to surrender and yield themselves to him consider this. Apprehend you have undone yourselves, and are lost. Fall before him. Lie at the foot-stool of the mercy-seat. Willingly put your mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope. And there is hope. He seeks after you, and will not reject what he seeks, he only waited to bring you to this. It is now a fit time for him, and a good time for you. And you may now, in resigning, intrust yourselves also to him: for his express promise is your sufficient ground for it. "I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." Understand the matter aright; your presenting, and yielding yourselves to him is not to be a desperate act.

It is not casting yourselves away. You are not throwing yourself into flames, but upon tender mercies, thither you may commit yourself. The thing that is pleasing to him, and which he invites you to, (as he invites all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved,) cannot be unsafe, or unhappy to you.

Again, love hath a great ingrediency into this self-resignation. And as it hath, so it more admits to be called dedicating, or devoting ourselves. This holy, ingenuous principle respects more the commands of God, as the other doth his promises, and eyes his interest, as the other doth our own. This dedication of ourselves, as it is influenced by it, designs the doing all for him we can, as by the other it doth the receiving all. As by the other we resign ourselves to him for safety and felicity; so we do by this for service and duty to our uttermost. And an ardent lover of God thinks this a little oblation. Myself! Alas! What am I? Too small a thing for him who is all love, and who, though he hath it in hand to transform and turn me into love too, such as so drossy, and limited a thing was capable of being made, how mean yet, and little is the subject he hath to work upon! An atom of dust! Not combustible, or apt to be wrought upon to this (to a divine and heavenly love) by any, but his flame. And now therefore, but a minute spark from the element of love, that must, however, thus transformed, tend towards its own original and native seat! It shall now flame upward. And this is all the flame, in which it is universally necessary, thy sacrifice should

ascend: which will refine only, not consume it. Though, that it may be offered up in other flames, is not impossible; nor will it be much regretted by you; if the case should so require, nor shall be despised by him, if he shall so state the case. To give the body to be burned, without love, goes for nothing; but if in that way, we were called to offer up our bodies, living sacrifices to God, it would (in an inferior sense) be an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, would even perfume heaven, and diffuse fragrant odours on earth: nor would be grudged at by that love that first made the whole of ourselves an offering to God; and whose property it is to be all things, to do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things for him, whose we wholly are. So that if he design any of us to be a whole burnt offering, and will have us to glorify him in the fire, love will not retract its vow, but say, after our great Pattern, "Not my will, but thine be done:" and as he, in his peculiar case and design, (not communicable with us, though the temper of spirit should be,) "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. A body hast thou (it now appears for this very purpose) prepared for me." —"He loved us, and gave himself for us." So are we, from our love of him, to give ourselves for him, and his use and service, in whatsoever kind he shall appoint and prescribe. Every true Christian is, in the preparation of his mind, a martyr; but they are few whom he actually calls to it. Our love is ordinarily to show itself in our keeping his commandments; and with that design we are to present ourselves to him, as the resolved, ready instruments

of his service and praise. "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Thus having been more large upon what was more essential in this dedication of ourselves, I shall be more brief in most of the other things belonging to it.

6. It must further be done with a concomitant acceptance of God. His covenant (which is now entered) is oftentimes summed up, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people:" and is resembled and frequently represented by the nuptial contract, in which there is mutual giving and taking. We are to resign and accept at the same time: to take him to be our God, when we yield ourselves to be his.

7. With an explicit reference to the Lord Christ. We are to dedicate ourselves, after the tenor of a covenant whereof he is the Mediator. God doth not upon other terms treat with sinners. You are not to offer at such a thing as dedicating yourselves to him, but in the way and upon the terms upon which you are to be accepted. The divine pleasure is declared and known, how great a one He must be in all the transactions of God with men; yea, and towards the whole creation, Eph. i. 6—10. "He hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of

his will, according to his good pleasure, which he had purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." We must take heed how we neglect or overlook Him who is by divine appointment so high in power, and with whom we have so great a concern.

8. With deep humility and abasement of ourselves, in conjunction with a profound reverence and veneration of the Divine Majesty. There ought to be the lowest self-abasement, such as that good man expresses, (varied to one's own case,) "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for mine iniquities are increased over mine head, and my trespass is grown up into the heavens." And indeed this is naturally consequent upon what was last said, of the regard that ought to be had in this matter to the Mediator; for surely that very constitution is in itself a humbling thing to us; and we cannot apply ourselves to God suitably to it, but with a self-abasing sense of our own state and case. Our coming and tendering ourselves to God in a Mediator, is in its very nature a humiliation, and carries with it a tacit confession, that in ourselves we have nothing, deserve nothing, are nothing, are worse than nothing; and that only this constitution of his could justify our offering ourselves to him, with any hope of acceptance; or make it less than an insolent presumption, for sinners to approach him, and expect to be received into his presence and service. It is not for such as we, to

behave ourselves towards him as if we either had not offended, or were capable of expiating our own offence. Yea, and if there had been nothing of delinquency in the case; yet great humility becomes such applications to him, and that in conjunction with the profoundest reverence and veneration of him; for our very business in this self-dedication, is worship, as the word in the text hath been noted to signify. And it is the first and most principal part of all the worship we owe to him, (as was noted from 2 Cor. viii. 5.) fundamental to all the rest. We must have before our eyes the awful majesty and glorious greatness of God; which Scripture often speaks of, as one notion of his holiness, and which we are to have principal reference unto in all the solemn homage we pay to him: as sacrifices (Outr. de Sac.) are well observed to have been offered to him so considered. And therefore, by this consideration, their suitableness to him is to be measured, as he doth himself insist. "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

9. With great joy and gladness of heart. It ought to be accompanied with the highest gusts and relishes of pleasure, both from the apprehensive congruity of the thing, and the expectation we have of acceptance. The thing itself should be pleasant to us. We are to do it as tasting our own act, as they did, 1 Chron. xxix. 9. "The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly." The self-devoting per-

son should be able to utter this as his sense, "Glad am I, that I am any thing, that I have a being, a soul, a reasonable intelligent being, capable of becoming a sacrifice to him." And that there is hope of being accepted: how great a joy is that? The apostle makes so great a thing of it, that he speaks as if he cared not whether he was in the body, or out of the body, so he might be accepted. Nuptials (that resemble, as hath been said, this transaction between God and the soul, wherein there is mutual giving and accepting) are wont to be seasons of great festivity and gladness. The great God himself rejoices in this closure, with such a joy, ("As a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so will thy God rejoice over thee,") and shall not we? How infinitely more amiable and delectable is the object of our choice than his! when we are to rejoice in the supreme and most perfect excellency: He, in what is clothed over (if he did not superinduce another clothing) with most loathsome deformity.

10. With an ingenuous candour and simplicity, with that sincerity which is to be as the salt of our sacrifice: without latent reserves, or a hidden meaning, disagreeing to his; which were both unjust and vain. Unjust; for we may not deceive any. And vain; for we cannot deceive him. The case admits not of restrictions, it must be done absolutely, without any limitation or reserve. You have heard this self-dedication is, in part, an act of love. And what limit can be set to a love, whose object is infinite? A natural limit, it is true, as it is the love of a creature, it cannot but have; but a chosen one it

ought never to have, as if we had loved enough. You know what kind of love is, and cannot but be, due to the all-comprehending God. With all thy heart, soul, mind, and might, &c. So without exception, that Maimonides,* reciting those words, adds, *Etiamsi tollat animam tuam.* The stream of thy love to him must not be diverted, or alter its course, though he would take away thy very life, or soul.

11. With the concomitant surrender to him of all that we have. For they that, by their own act and acknowledgment, are not themselves their own, but devoted, must also acknowledge they are owners of nothing else. In that mentioned form of surrender in Livy, when Egerius, on the Romans' part, had inquired, "Are you the ambassadors sent by the people of Collatia that you may yield up yourselves and the Collatine people?" and it was answered, "We are:" and it was again asked, "Are the Collatine people in their own power?" and answered, "They are:" it is further inquired, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the people of Collatia, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both divine and human, into mine and the people of Rome's power?" They say, "We deliver up all." And he answers, "So I receive you." So do they who deliver up themselves to God, much more, all that they called theirs. God indeed is the only Proprietor, men are but usufructuaries. They have

* De Fund. Legis. p. 61.

the use of what his providence allots them; he reserves to himself the property; and limits the use so far, as that all are to be accountable to him for all they possess; and are to use nothing they have, but as under him and for him, as also they are to do themselves. Therefore, as they are required to "glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his," so they are to "honour him with their substance," upon the same reason. But few effectually apprehend his right in their persons; which as we are therefore to recognise in this dedication of ourselves to him, so we are in a like general sense, to devote to him all that we enjoy in the world. That is, as all are not to devote themselves specially to serve him in a sacred office, but all are obliged to devote themselves to his service in the general; so, though all are not required to devote their estates to this or that particular pious use, they are obliged to use them wholly for his glory in the general, and for the service of his interest in the world. We are obliged neither to withhold from him, nor mispend, these his mercies: but must "live righteously," (wherein charity is comprehended,) "soberly, and godly" in it; decline no opportunities that shall occur to us, within the compass of our own sphere and station, of doing him (though never so costly and hazardous) service; must forsake all and follow him, when our duty, and our continued possessions of this world's goods, come to be inconsistent; must submit patiently to our lot, when that falls out to be our case, or to any providence by which we are bereaved of our worldly comforts, with that temper of

mind, as to be able cheerfully to say, "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

It is indeed the greatest absurdity imaginable, that they who are not masters of themselves, should think it permitted them to use what comes to their hands as they list; for the service of their own lusts, and the gratifying of a rebel flesh, that hath rejected the government of their own reason, and of all divine laws at once: or that he who hath so absolute a right in them, should not have that right in what he hath committed to them, as to prescribe rules to them, by which to use and employ it. At the same time, and in the same sense, wherein we make a dedication of ourselves, we do the same thing as to all that we have. Even according to common human estimate, according to what interest men have in others, or power over them, they have a correspondent interest in what they possess. They that absolutely surrender themselves to the power of another, leave not themselves capable of proper dominion as to any thing. Therefore, says the civil law, "Those who have surrendered themselves are not allowed to dispose of their own property." They were so under several nations, it is true; but they that were strictly so, had not power to make a will, as having nothing to dispose of. No man has certainly a power to dispose of any thing (and when they surrender themselves by their own act and deed to God, they acknowledge so much) otherwise than as divine rules direct or permit. They have a right in what is duly theirs, against the counter-claim of

man, but none, sure, against the claim and all-disposing power of God, whether signified by his law or by his providence. Therefore, with this temper of mind should this self-dedication be made: "Lord, I here lay myself, and all that belongs to me, most entirely at thy feet. All things are of thee:" (as they are brought in saying, who make that willing, joyful offering, 1 Chron. xxix.) "What I have in the world is more thine than mine. I desire neither to use nor possess any thing, but by thy leave and for thy sake."

12. With befitting circumstantial solemnity; that is, it ought to be direct, express, and explicit; not to be huddled up in tacit, mute intimations only. We should not content ourselves that it be no more than implied, in what we do otherwise, and run on with it as a thing that must be supposed, and taken for granted, never actually performed and done. It is very true indeed, that a continued, uniform course and series of agreeable actions, a holy life and practice, carry a great deal more of significancy with them, than only having once said, without this form of words, "Lord, I will be thine." Practice, whether it be good or bad, more fully speaks our sense, and expresses our hearts, than bare words spoken at some particular time, can do, for they at the most speak but our present sense at that time, and perhaps do not always that; but a course of practice shows the habitual posture and steady bent of our spirits. Nor do I think that a formal, explicit transaction, in this matter, whether vocal or mental, with circumstantial solemnity, is essential to

a man's being a Christian, or a holy man. A fixed inclination and bent of heart towards God, followed, as it will be, with a course of practice becoming them that are his, will no doubt conclude a man's state to be safe and good God-ward; as one may, on the other hand, be the devil's servant all his days, without having made a formal covenant with him. But yet, though so explicit and solemn a transaction of this matter be not essential to our Christianity, (as what is said to belong only to the solemnity of any thing, is therein implied not to be of the essence of it,) yet it may be a great duty for all that, and I doubt it not to be so.

And it may here be worth the while, to insist a little; that if this indeed be a duty, it may obtain more in our practice, than perhaps it doth. Some, through mere inadvertency, may not have considered it; others, that have, may possibly think it less needful, because they reckon it was formerly done for them. They were born of Christian parents, who dedicated them to God from their birth; and they were, with solemnity, presented to him in their baptism. What need we then do over again a thing already done? Let us reason this matter therefore a while, and consider whether notwithstanding any such allegation, our personal dedicating ourselves to God in Christ be not still reasonable and necessary to be performed by ourselves also, as our own solemn act and deed? It were indeed much to be wished that our baptismal dedication to God were more minded and thought on than it commonly is; when with such sacred solemnity we were devoted to

the triune Deity, and those great and awful names were named upon us, the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost. Baptisms are, it is to be feared, too often in the Christian world turned into a mere pageantry, and the matter scarce ever thought on more, when the show is over; and very probably because this great succedaneous duty is so unpractised among Christians.

(1.) And let it be considered, Are there no like cases? Do we not know, that though all the infants in a kingdom are born subjects, yet when they arrive to a certain age they are obliged, being called, to take the oath of allegiance, and each one to come under personal obligation to their prince? And do we owe less to the God that made us, and the Lord that bought us with his blood?

Again, Though all the sons of Israelites were in their infancy dedicated to God by the then appointed rite for that purpose, yet how frequent were their solemn, personal recognitions of his covenant: their avouching themselves to be his people, as he also avouched himself to be their God: which we see Deut. xxvi. and in many other places. It is remote from me to intend the pressing of a covenant that contains any disputable or doubtful matters, or any other than the substance of our baptismal covenant itself, consisting of the known essentials of our Christianity, all summed up in taking God in Christ for our God, and resigning ourselves to him to be inviolably his: no more is meant than that this may be done as our own reasonable service and worship; as our intelligent, deliberate, judicious act and choice.

(2.) And consider further, to this purpose, the great importance of the thing itself, compared with the lesser concernments wherein we use to deal most explicitly. Is it fit that a man's religion should be less the matter of his solemn choice, than his inferior concerns? that when he chooses his dwelling, his calling, his servant, or master, he should seem thrown upon his God and his religion by chance? and that least should appear of caution, care, and punctual dealing, in our very greatest concernment? How great a day in a man's life doth he count his marriage-day! How accurate are men wont to be, in all the preparations and previous settlements that are to be made in order to it! And since the great God is pleased to be so very particular with us, in proposing the model and contents of his covenant, the promises and precepts which make his part and ours in it; how attentive should we be to his proposals, and how express in our consent! especially, when we consider his admirable condescension in it, that he is pleased, and disdains not, to capitulate with the work of his hands, to article with dust and ashes. Is it reasonable we should be slight and superficial in a treaty with that great Lord of heaven and earth, or scarce ever purposely apply and set ourselves to mind him in it at all?

(3.) Moreover it is your own concernment, and therefore ought to be transacted by yourself. So far as there is any equity in that rule, What concerns all should be transacted by all—it resolves into this, and supposes it; that which concerns myself should be transacted by myself.

Again, your being devoted by parents, no more excuses from solemn, personal, self-devoting, than their doing other acts of religion for you, excuses you from doing them for yourselves. They have prayed for you, are you therefore never to pray for yourselves? They have lamented your sin, are you never therefore to lament your own?

(4.) Consider further, Scripture warns us not to lay too much stress upon parental privilege, or place too much confidence in it, which it supposes men over apt to do. Abraham's seed may be a "generation of vipers." "I know you are Abraham's seed," yet he finds them another father.

(5.) Consider moreover, the renewing work of God's grace and Spirit upon souls, consists in sanctifying their natural faculties, their understandings, consciences, wills, affections. And what are these sanctified for, but to be used and exercised? And to what more noble purpose? If there be that holy impress upon the soul, that inclines all the powers of it God-ward, what serves it for, but to prompt and lead it on to the correspondent acts? to apprehend and eye God, to admit a conviction of duty, and particularly, how I owe myself to him; to choose, love, fear, and serve him; and what doth all this import less, than an entire self-resignation to him? So that the genuine tendency of the holy new nature is in nothing so directly answered and satisfied as in this. And it ought to be considered, that the faculties of our reasonable souls have a natural improvement and perfection, as well as a gracious. And for their highest and noblest acts, it is fit they

should be used in their highest perfection. It is possible, that in the children of religious parents, there may be some pious inclinations betimes; and the sooner they thereupon choose the God of their fathers, the better, that is, if you compare doing it and not doing it, it is better done than not done. But because this is a thing that cannot be too often done, nor too well; the more mature your understanding is, the better it will be done, the grace of God concurring. Our Lord himself increased in wisdom, &c.

(6.) Moreover, let it be seriously thought on (what it is dreadful to think) the occasion you will give, if you decline this surrendering yourselves, to have your neglect taken for a refusal. It is impossible, when you once understand the case, you can be in an indifferency about it. You must either take or leave.

(7.) Nor can it be denied but personal self-devoting, one way or other, (more or less solemn,) is most necessary to the continuing serious Christianity in the world. Without it, our religion were but the business of an age: for how unlikely were it, and absurd to suppose, that a man should seriously devote his child to God, that never devoted himself? And if that were done never so seriously, must one be a Christian always, only by the Christianity of another, not his own? Some way or other then, a man must devote himself to God in Christ, or be, at length, no Christian. And since he must, the nature of the thing speaks, that the more solemn and express it is, the better, and more suitable to a transaction with so great a Majesty.

And hath not common reason taught the world to fix a *transitus*, and settle some time or other, wherein persons should be reckoned to have past out of their state of infancy or minority, into the state of manhood or an adult state; wherein, though before they could not legally transact affairs for themselves, yet afterwards they could? This time, by the constitutions of several nations, and for several purposes, hath been diversely fixed. But they were not to be looked upon as children always. Some time they come to write man. Is it reasonable one should be a child, and a minor in the things of God and religion, all his days? always in nonage? Sometime they must "be men in understanding," and "have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil."

Yea, and there is far greater reason we should personally and solemnly transact this great affair with God, than any concern we have with men. For, among men we may have a right by natural descent, or by valuable considerations, to what we enjoy, which may be clear and little liable to question: from God we have no right, but by his favour and vouchsafement. You are his children, if ever you come to be so, but by adoption. And human adoption has been wont to be completed by a solemnity; the person to adopt, being publicly asked (in that sort of adoption which was also called arrogation) whether he would have this person to be as his own very son? And again; he that was to be adopted, whether he was contented it should be so?

Nor again is there that disinclination towards men, as towards God, or that proneness to revolt from settled agreements, with the one, as with the other. Whereas love sums up all the duty of both the tablets; or which we owe both to God and man; it is evident that, in our present lapsed state, our love to God is more impaired, than to man. Indeed this latter seems only diminished, the other is destroyed, and hath, by nature, no place in us; grace only restores it. Where it is in some measure restored, we find it more difficult to exercise love towards God, than man; which the apostle's reasoning implies, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Who sees not that sensuality hath buried the rational world! Unregenerate man is said to be in the flesh, not as being only lodged in it, as all are alike, but governed by it, under its power: as the holy apostle is said to have been "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." To be in the flesh is expounded by being and walking after it. Hence men only love and savour the things within this sensible sphere. They that are after the flesh, do savour only the things of the flesh. Where the regenerate, divine life is implanted, it is ill lodged, in conjunction with a strong remaining sensual inclination: so that where the soul is somewhat raised by it, out of that mire and dirt, there is a continual decidency, a proneness to relapse, and sink back into it. Impressions therefore of an invisible Ruler and Lord, as of all unseen things, are very evanescent; soon, in a great degree worn off; especially where

they were but in making, and not yet thoroughly inwrought into the temper of the soul. Hence is that instability in the covenant of God. We are not so afraid before, nor ashamed afterwards, of breaking engagements with him, as with men, whom we are often to look in the face, and converse with every day.

Therefore there is the more need here of the strictest ties, and most solemn obligations, that we can lay upon ourselves. How apprehensive doth that holy, excellent governor, Joshua, (Josh. xxiv.) seem of this, when he was shortly to leave the people under his conduct! And what urgent means doth he use, to bring them to the most express, solemn dedication of themselves to God, that was possible; first representing the reasonableness and equity of the thing, from the many endearing wonders of mercy (as here the apostle beseeches these Romans by the mercies of God) which he recounts from the beginning, to the 14th verse of the xxivth chapter: then, thereupon exhorting them to "fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity," &c. in that 14th verse, telling them, withal, if they should all resolve otherwise to a man, what his own resolution was, (verse 15.) "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" taking also their express answer, which they give, verse 16—18. But fearing they did not enough consider the matter,

he, as it were, puts them back (esteeming himself to have gotten an advantage upon them) that they might come on again with the more vigour and force. "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God: he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good," verse 19, 20. Hereupon, according to his expectation and design, they reinforce their view: "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And upon this, he closes with them, and takes fast hold of them: "Ye are witnesses," saith he, "against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they say, "We are witnesses," verse 22. He exhorts them afresh, and they engage over again, verse 23, 24. Thus a covenant is made with them, verse 25. After all this, a record is taken of the whole transaction; it is booked down, (verse 26.) and a monumental stone set up, to preserve the memory of this great transaction. And the good man tells them, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." So he dismisses them, and lets them go every one to his inheritance.

Nor is it to be neglected, that Isa. xliv. 5. (which is generally agreed to refer to the times of the gospel,) it is so expressly set down, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his

hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." In the rendering of which words, "subscribe with the hand," the versions vary. Some read, "inscribe in their hands," the Lord's name; counting it an allusion to the ancient custom, as to servants and soldiers, that they were to carry, stamped upon the palm of their hands, the name of their master or general. The Syriac read to the same sense as we—Shall give an hand writing to be the Lord's. That the thing be done, and with great seriousness, distinctness, and solemnity, is no doubt highly reasonable and necessary; about the particular manner I prescribe not.

Nor can I imagine what any man can have to object, but the backwardness of his own heart to any intercourse or conversation with the invisible God: which is but an argument of the miserable condition of depraved mankind; and none, that the thing is not to be done. For, that backwardness must proceed from some deeper reason than that God is invisible: a reason, that should not only convince, but amaze us, and even overwhelm our souls in sorrow and lamentation, to think what state the nature and spirit of man are brought into! For is not the devil invisible too? And what wretch is there so silly and ignorant, but can by the urgency of discontent, envy, and an appetite of revenge, find a way to fall into a league with him? Is this, that God is less conversable with men? less willing to be found of them that seek Him? No surely,*

* Read considerately, Heb. xi. 6.

but that men have less mind and inclination to seek Him! And is this a posture and temper of spirit towards the God that made us, (the continual spring of our life and being!) in which it is fit for us to tolerate ourselves? Shall not the necessity of this thing, and of our own case, (not capable of remedy while we withhold ourselves from God,) overcome all the imagined difficulty in applying ourselves to Him?

Use.—And upon the whole, if we agree the thing itself to be necessary, it cannot be doubted, but it will appear to be of common concernment to us all; and that every one must apprehend it is necessary to me, and to me, whether we have done it already, or not done it. If we have not, it cannot be done too soon; if we have, it cannot be done too often. And it may now be done, by private, silent ejaculation, the convinced persuaded heart saying within itself, "Lord, I consent to be wholly thine, I here resign and devote myself absolutely and entirely to thee." None of you know what may be in the heart of another, to this purpose, even at this time. Why then should not every one fear to be the only person of those who now hear, that disagrees to it? If any find his heart to reluctate and draw back, it is fit such a one should consider, "I do not know but this self-devoting disposition and resolution is the common sense of all the rest, even of all that are now present but mine." And who would not dread to be the only one in an assembly, that shall refuse God! or refuse himself to him! For, let such a one think, "What particular reason

can I have to exclude myself from such a consenting chorus? Why should I spoil the harmony, and give a disagreeing vote? Why should any man be more willing to be dutiful and happy than I? to be just to God, or have him good to me? Why should any one be more willing to be saved than I; and to make one hereafter, in the glorious, innumerable, joyful assembly of devoted angels and saints, that pay an eternal, gladsome homage to the throne of the celestial King?" But if any find their hearts inclining, let what is now begun, be more fully completed in the closet; and let those walls, as Joshua's stone, hear, and bear witness!

Lest any should not consent, and that all may consent more freely, and more largely; I shall in a few words show, what should induce to it, and what it should induce to.

1. What should induce to it? You have divers sorts of inducements.

(1.) Such as may be taken from necessity. For what else can you do with yourself? You cannot be happy without it, for who should make you so but God? and how shall he, while you hold off yourselves from him? You cannot but be miserable, not only as not having engaged him to you, but as having engaged him against you.

(2.) Such as may be taken from equity. You are his right. He hath a natural right in you as he is your Maker, the Author of your being: and an acquired right, as you were bought by his Son, who hath redeemed us to God, and who died, rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord of the liv-

ing and the dead—here, to rule—hereafter, to judge us. Both which he can do, whether we will or not: but it is not to be thought he will save us against our wills. His method is, whom he saves, first to overcome, that is, to make them "willing in the day of his power." And dare we, who "live, move, and have our being in him," refuse to be, live, and move to him? or, "deny the Lord who bought us?"

(3.) And again, such as may be taken from ingenuity, or that should work upon it, namely, what we are besought by, in the text, "the mercies of God." How manifold are they! But they are the mercies of the gospel especially, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, which are thus referred unto in the beginning of this, the transferring what the Jews forfeited and lost, by their unbelief, unto us Gentiles: that "mystery" as this apostle elsewhere calls it, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel:" in reference whereto he so admiringly cries out a little above the text, "O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" the mercies of which it is said, Isa. lv. 1—3. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that

which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Which free and sure mercies are heightened, as to us, by the same both endearing and awful circumstance, that these mercies are offered to us, namely, in conjunction with the setting before our eyes the monitory, tremendous example of a forsaken nation that rejected them, intimated ver. 5. "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee:" a case whereof our apostle says, in the foregoing chapter, Isaiah was very bold; when speaking of it in another place, he uses these words, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." He was bold in it indeed, to mention such a thing to a people, unto whom a jealous gloriation in the peculiarity of their privileged state, their being without partners or rivals, for so long a time, in their relation and nearness to God, was grown so natural: and who took it so impatiently, when our Saviour did but intimate the same thing to them by parables, Matt. xxi. 33—46. as that they sought immediately to lay hands on him for that very reason. So unaccountable a perverseness of humour reigned with them, that they envied to others, what they despised themselves.

But, on the other hand, nothing ought more

highly to recommend those mercies to us, or more engage us to accept them with gratitude, and improve them with a cautious fear of committing a like forfeiture, than to have them brought to our hands, redeemed from the contempt of the former despisers of them, and that, so terribly, vindicated upon them at the same time; as it also still continues to be. That the natural branches of the olive should be torn off, and we inserted: that there should be such an instance given us of the severity and goodness of God, chap. xi. To them that fell, severity; but to us, goodness, if we continue in his goodness, to warn us, that otherwise, we may expect to be cut off too! and that we might apprehend, if he spared not the natural branches, he was as little likely to spare us! that when he came to his own and they received him not, he should make so free an offer to us, that if we would yet receive him, (which if we do, we are, as hath been said, to yield up and dedicate ourselves to him at the same time,) we should have the privilege to be owned for the sons of God! what should so oblige us to compliance with him, and make us with an ingenuous trembling fall before him, and, crying to him, "My Lord and my God," resign ourselves wholly to his power and pleasure?

And even his mercies more abstractly considered, ought to have that power upon us. Were we not lost? Are we not rescued from a necessity of perishing, and being lost for ever, in the most costly way? costly, to our Redeemer, but to us, without cost. Is it a small thing, that he offers himself to us, as he doth when he demands us, and requires

that we offer ourselves to him: that he, in whom is all the fulness of God, having first offered himself for us, doth now offer himself also to us; that he hath treated us, hitherto, with such indulgence, waited on us with so long patience, sustained us by so large bounty? And now upon all, when it might be thought we should be communing with our own hearts, discoursing the matter with ourselves, "What shall we render?" that he should say to us so shortly and compendiously, Render yourselves. Is that too much? Are we too inconsiderable to be his, or his mercies too inconsiderable to oblige us to be so? the mercies that flow so freely from him, for he is the Father of mercies: the mercies that are so suitable to us, pardon to the guilty, light to them that dwell in darkness, life to the dead, a rich portion and all-sufficient fulness for the poor, indigent, and necessitous: the mercies that we are encouraged to expect as well as what we enjoy: the great good laid up in store! the mercies of eternity to be added to those of time: the mercies of both worlds, meeting upon us! that here we are to "keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!" that, looking for that blessed hope, our life may here, in the mean time, be transacted with him, that we may abide in the secret of his presence, and dwelling in love, may dwell in God who is love; till the season come, when we shall be able more fully to understand his love, and return our own!

Nor are the favours of his providence to be thought little of in the time of our earthly pilgrimage. And

now, if all this do effectually induce us to dedicate ourselves,

2. We are next to consider, what our having done it ought further to induce us unto.

In the general, it ought to be an inducement to us, as we may well apprehend, to behave ourselves answerably to such a state, as we are hereby brought into, if we now first dedicated ourselves to him, and are confirmed in, by our iterations of it. For he takes no pleasure in fools; therefore, having vowed ourselves to him, to serve, and live to him, let us pay what we have vowed. Better it had been not to vow, than to vow and not pay; and instead of the reasonable sacrifice he required of us, to give him only the sacrifice of fools. We are, upon special terms, and for special ends, peculiar to the most high God. They that are thus his, are "a royal priesthood: He hath made us kings and priests." Both those offices and dignities have sometimes met in the same person. And to God and his Father, that is, for him. Not that both those offices do terminate upon God, or that the work of both is to be performed towards him, but our Lord Jesus, it being the design of his Father we should be brought into that high and honourable station, hath effected it, in compliance with his design, and hath served his pleasure and purpose in it. He hath done it to, that is, for him. So that, to God and his Father may be referred to Christ's action, in making us kings and priests, not to ours, being made such. Yet the one of these refers to God immediately, the other to ourselves. Holy and good men are kings in re-

ference to themselves, in respect of their self-dominion into which they are now restored, having been, as all unregenerate persons are, slaves to vile and carnal affections and inclinations. The minds of the regenerate are made spiritual, and now with them the refined, rectified, spiritual mind, is enthroned; lifted up into its proper authority over all sensual inclinations, appetites, lusts, and passions. A glorious empire! founded in conquest, and managed afterwards, when the victory is complete; and in the meantime, in some degree, while "judgment is in bringing forth unto victory," by a steady, sedate government in most perfect tranquillity and peace.

But they are priests in reference to God; the business of their office, as such, terminates upon him; for him they worship and serve. Worship is either social, external and circumstantial, that of worshipping societies, considered according to its exterior part, wherein one is appointed by special office, to do the part of a priest for the rest; (in this sense all are not priests;) or else it is solitary, internal, substantial and spiritual, wherein they either worship alone, and apart by themselves, or being in conjunction with others, yet their own spirits within them work directly, and aspire upwards to God. And as to this more noble part of their worship, every holy man is his own priest.

And this is the double dignity of every holy, devoted soul. They are thus kings, and priests; govern themselves, and serve God. While they govern, they serve; exercise authority over themselves, with most submissive veneration of God: crowned,

and enthroned; but always in a readiness to cast down their crowns at the footstool of the supreme, celestial throne. Into this state they come by self-dedication. And now surely, it is not for such to demean themselves at a vulgar rate. They are of "the church of the first-born written in heaven;" that is, the church of the first-born ones; that is, all composed and made up of such; (as that expression signifies;) first-born, in a true (though not the most eminent) sense, being sons by the first, that is, the prime and more excellent sort of birth, in respect whereof they are said to be begotten again "by the word of truth, that they should be a kind of first-fruits of the creatures of God." And this twofold dignity is the privilege of their birthright, as anciently it was. Are you devoted to God? Have you dedicated yourselves? Hereby you are arrived to this dignity. For in the above-mentioned place (Heb. xii.) it is said, "Ye are come;" you are actually, already, adjoined to that church, and are the real present members of that holy community. For you are related and united to him of whom the family of heaven and earth is named; are of the household, and the sons of God, his, under that peculiar notion, when you have dedicated yourselves to him. You cannot but apprehend there are peculiarities of behaviour in your after-conduct and management of yourselves that belong to you, and must answer and correspond to your being, in this sense, his. Some particulars whereof I shall briefly mention.

(1.) You should each of you often reflect upon it, and bethink yourself what you have done, and

whose you now are. "I am the devoted one of the most high God." It was one of the precepts given by a Pagan (Epict.) to his disciples, "Think with yourself, upon all occasions, I am a philosopher." What a world of sin and trouble might that thought, often renewed, prevent, "I am a Christian, one devoted to God in Christ." Your having done this thing, should clothe your mind with new apprehensions, both of God and yourselves: that he is not now a stranger to you, but your God, that you are not unrelated to him, but his. "I was an enemy, now am reconciled. I was a common, profane thing, now holiness to the Lord." It is strange to think how one act doth sometimes habit and tincture a man's mind; whether in the kind of good or evil. To have committed an act of murder! What a horrid complexion of mind did Cain upon this bear with him. To have dedicated one's self to God, if seriously and duly done; would it have less power to possess one with a holy, calm, peaceful temper of mind?

(2.) You should, hereupon, charge yourself with all suitable duty towards him; for you have given yourself to him to serve him; that is your very business. You are his, and are to do his work, not your own, otherwise than as it falls in with his, and is his. You are to discharge yourself of all unsuitable cares: for will not he take care of his own, who hath put so ill a note upon them that do not: "He that provideth not for his own, (his domestics,) those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel?" Will you think, he can be

like such a one? Who, if not the children of a prince, should live free from care?

You should most deeply concern yourself about his concerns, without any apprehension or fear that he will neglect those that are most truly yours; and are not to be indifferent how his interest thrives or is depressed in the world; is increased or diminished. They that are his, should let his affairs engross their cares and thoughts.

You should abandon all suspicious, hard thoughts of him. When in the habitual bent of your spirits you desire to please him, it is most injurious to him, to think he will abandon, and give you up to perish, or become your enemy. It is observable what care was taken among the Romans, that no hostility might be used towards them that had surrendered themselves. Can men excel God in praise-worthy things? You can think nothing of God more contrary to his gospel, or his nature, than to surmise he will destroy one that hath surrendered to and bears a loyal mind towards him. And what a reproach do you cast upon him, when you give others occasion to say, "His own, they that have devoted themselves to him, dare not trust him?" You are taught to say, "I am thine, save me;" not to suspect he will ruin you. They do strangely misshape religion, considering in how great part it consists in trusting God, and living a life of faith, that frame to themselves a religion made up of distrusts, doubts, and fears.

You should dread to alienate yourselves from him, which, as sacrilege is one of the most detestable of

all sins, a robbing of God is the most detestable sacrilege. You are to reserve yourselves entirely for him. Every one that is godly he hath set apart for himself.

Yea, and you are not only to reserve, but to your uttermost, to improve and better yourselves for him daily: to aspire to an excellency, in some measure, suitable to your relation: "to walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory," remembering you are here to glorify him, and hereafter to be glorified with him. And who is there of us that finds not himself under sufficient obligation, by the mercies of God, unto all this? or to whom he may not say, in a far more eminent sense, than the apostle speaks it to Philemon, "Thou owest even thyself also unto me?" Shall we refuse to give God what we owe? or can we think it fit, itself, "we should be no otherwise his, than (as one well says) fields, woods, and mountains, and brute beasts?" And, I may add, can it be comfortable to us, that he should have no other interest in us than he hath in devils? Is there no difference in the case of reasonable creatures and unreasonable? their's who profess devotedness to him, and their's who are his professed enemies? The one sort, through natural incapacity, cannot, by consent, be his, and the other, through an invincible malignity, never will. Are there no mercies, conferred or offered, that do peculiarly oblige us more? Let us be more frequent and serious in recounting our mercies, and set ourselves on purpose to enter into the memory of God's great goodness, that we may thence, from time to time,

urge upon themselves this great and comprehensive duty. And at this time, being here together on purpose, let us consider and reflect afresh upon that eminent mercy which you are wont to commemorate in the yearly return of this day.

And that I may, more particularly, direct my speech the same way, that the voice of that memorable providence is especially directed; you are, my Lord, to be more peculiarly besought by the mercies of God, that you would this day dedicate yourself to him. I do therefore beseech you, by the many endearing mercies which God hath so plentifully conferred upon you, by the mercies of your noble extraction and birth, by the mercies of your very ingenious and pious education, by the mercies of your family, which God hath made to descend to you from your honourable progenitors; which, as they are capable of being improved, may be very valuable mercies; by the blood and tender mercies of your blessed and glorious Redeemer, who offered up himself a Sacrifice to God for you, that you would now present yourself to God, a holy, living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service. I add, by the signal mercy which hath made this a memorable day to you, and by which you come, thus long, to enjoy the advantages of all your other mercies. How came it to pass that this day comes not to be remembered by your noble relatives, as a black and a gloomy day, the day of the extinction of the present light and lustre of your family, and of quenching their coal which was left? You had a great Preserver, who we hope delivered you because he de-

lighted in you. Your life was precious in his sight. Your breath was in his hand; he preserved and renewed it to you, when you were ready to breathe your last. And we hope he will vouchsafe you that greater deliverance, not to let you fall under the charge which was once exhibited against a great man, "The God in whose hands thy breath is—hast thou not glorified:" and make you rather capable of adopting those words, "Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." Your acknowledgments are not to be limited to one day in the year; but from day to day his loving kindness, and your prayer and praise, are to compose your day and night; the one, to show you, the other, to be unto you your morning and evening exercise. Let this be your resolution, "Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever;" or that, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being."

Yet your more solemn acknowledgments are justly pitched upon this day. God hath noted it for you, and made it a great day in your time. You have now enjoyed a *septennium*, seven years of mercies. And we all hope you will enjoy many more, which may all be called the posterity of that day's mercy. It was the parent of them all; so pregnant and productive a mercy was that of this day. You do owe it to the mercy of this day, that you have yet a life to devote to the great Lord of heaven and earth, and

to employ in the world for him: and would you think of any less noble sacrifice?

Æschines the philosopher, out of his admiration of Socrates, when divers presented him with other gifts, made a tender to him of himself. Less was thought an insufficient acknowledgment of the worth and favours of a man! Can any thing less be thought worthy of a God? I doubt not you intend, my Lord, a life of service to the God of your life. You would not, I presume, design to serve him under any other notion, than as his. By dedicating yourself to him, you become so in the peculiar sense. It is our part in the covenant which must be between God and us. "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." This is the ground of a settled relation, which we are to bear towards him, as his servants. It is possible I may do an occasional service for one whose servant I am not; but it were mean that a great person should only be served by the servants of another lord. To be served but precariously, and as it were upon courtesy only, true greatness would disdain; as if his quality did not admit to have servants of his own.

Nor can it be thought a serious Christian, in howsoever dignifying circumstances, should reckon himself too great to be his servant, when even a heathen (Seneca) pronounces—To serve God is to reign. A religious nobleman of France (Monsieur de Renty, whose affection I commend more than this external expression of it) tells us he made a deed of gift of himself to God, signing it with his own blood. He was much a greater man, that so

often speaks in that style, "Thy servant," that it is plain he took pleasure in it, and counted it his highest glory. "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear." "Thy servant, thy servant, O Lord, the son of thy handmaid;" (alluding to the law by which the children of bond-servants were servants by birth,) "thou hast broken my bonds;" hast released me from worse bonds, that I might not only be patient, but glad to be under thine.

Nor was he a mean prince* in his time, who at length abandoning the pleasures and splendour of his own court, (whereof many like examples might be given,) retired and assumed the name of *Christodulus*—a servant of Christ, accounting the glory of that name did outshine, not only that of his other illustrious titles, but of the imperial diadem too. There are very few in the world, whom the too common atheism can give temptation unto to think religion an ignominy, and to count it a reproach to be the devoted servant of the most high God; but have it at hand to answer themselves, even by human, not to speak of the higher angelical, instances, that he hath been served by greater than we.

You are, my Lord, shortly to enter upon the more public stage of the world. You will enter with great advantages of hereditary honour, fortune, friends; with the greater advantage of, I hope, a well-cultivated mind, and, what is yet greater, of a

* Cantacuzenus, whose life also, among many other remarkable things, was once strangely preserved in the fall of his horse

piously inclined heart; but you will also enter with disadvantages too. It is a slippery stage; it is a divided time, wherein there is interest against interest; party against party. To have seriously, and with a pious obstinacy dedicated yourself to God, will both direct and fortify you.

I know no party in which nothing is amiss. Nor will that measure let you think it advisable, to be of any, further than to unite with what there is of real, true godliness among them all. Neither is there any surer rule or measure for your direction, than this; to take the course and way which are most agreeable to a state of devotedness to God. Reduce all things else, hither. Wheresoever you believe, in your conscience, there is a sincere design for the interest and glory of God, the honour or safety of your prince, the real good and welfare of your country, there you are to fall in, and adhere. And the first of these comprehends the rest. You will not be the less inclined, but much the more, to give Cesar the things that are Cesar's, for your giving God the things that are God's. And that is, as hath been said, principally and in the first place yourself; and then all that is yours to be used according to his holy rules, and for him whose you are.

And what can be to you the ground of a higher fortitude? Can they be unsafe that have devoted themselves to God? Dedicate yourself, and you become a sanctuary, as well as a sacrifice, inviolably safe in what part, and in what respects, it is considerable to be so. And who can think themselves

unsafe, being, with persevering fidelity, sacred to God; that understand who he is, and consider his power and dominion over both worlds, the present, and that which is to come: so as that he can punish and reward in both, as men prove false or faithful to him. The triumphs of wickedness are short, in this world. In how glorious triumphs will religion and devotedness to God end in the other!

ON

YIELDING OURSELVES TO GOD.

TO

THE MUCH-HONOURED

BARTHOLOMEW SOAME, Esq. of Thurlow,

AND

SUSANNA, HIS PIOUS CONSORT.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

I HAVE at length yielded to your importunity, and do here offer this Discourse to public view, and your own: which was, one day last summer, preached under your roof; attributing more to your pious design herein, than to my own reasons against it. I no farther insist upon the incongruity, having several years ago published a small Treatise on Self-dedication, now again to send abroad another on the same subject. For the way of tractation is here very different; this may fall into the hands of divers who have never seen the other; and however, they who have read the other, have it in their choice whether they will trouble themselves with this or not. And though your purpose which you urged me with, of lodging one of these little books in each family of the hearers, might have been answered by so disposing of many a better book, already extant, yet having told me how greatly you observed them to be moved by these plain discourses, considering the peculiar advantage of reading what had been, with some acceptance and relish heard before (through that greater vigour that accompanies the ordinance of preaching to an assembly, than doth usually the so-

litary first reading of the same thing) I was not willing to run the hazard of incurring a guilt, by refusing a thing so much desired, and which, through God's blessing, might contribute something, though in never so low a degree, to the saving of men's souls. I could not, indeed, as I told you, undertake to recollect every thing that was spoken, according to that latitude and freedom of expression, wherewith it was fit to inculcate momentous things to a plain country auditory: but I have omitted nothing I could call to mind; being little concerned that the more curious may take notice, with dislike, how much, in a work of this kind, I prefer plainness, though they may call it rudeness, of speech, before that which goes for wisdom of words, or the most laboured periods.

May you find an abundant blessing on your household, for the sake of the ark, which you have so piously and kindly received; and whereas, by your means, the parts about you have a help for the spreading the knowledge of God among them, added to what they otherwise more statedly enjoy; may the blessing of Heaven succeed all sincere endeavours of both sorts; to the more general introducing of the "new man which is renewed in knowledge—where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all, and in all." To whose grace, you are, with sincere affection and great sense of your kindness, earnestly recommended, by

Your much obliged,
Faithful Servant in Christ,
JOHN HOWE.

ON

YIELDING OURSELVES TO GOD.

ROMANS VI. 13.

Yield yourselves unto God.

THESE are but a few words, but I can speak to you of no greater or more important thing than I am to press upon you from them this day. We are above taught how absurd it is to continue in sin, whereto we are avowedly dead, ver. 1, 2. as is signified by our baptism; together with our entrance into a new state of life, and that in both we are to be conformed unto the death and resurrection of Christ, ver. 3, 4, 5. so that sin ought now no more to have a new dominion over us, than death can again have over him, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. We are therefore exhorted so to account of ourselves, and of our present state, "That we are dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and thereupon never more to let sin govern us, or reign over us, or yield to it, ver. 11, 12, 13. former part.

But what then? How are we otherwi. · to dis-

pose of ourselves? If we may not yield ourselves to the service of sin, what are we then to do with ourselves? The text tells us, and the very reason of the thing shows it; "but yield yourselves to God," &c.

The subject to be discoursed of is an express precept, charging it upon us all as our unquestionable duty, to "yield ourselves to God;" which therefore, it can only be our business, in speaking to this text, to explain and apply.

First, We are to explain it. Whosoever shall charge upon others such a duty, not obvious, perhaps, at the first view, in the full extent of it, to every one's understanding, may well expect to be asked: but what do you mean by this precept? or what doth this "yielding ourselves to God" signify?

And here are two things to be opened to you.

First. How, or under what notions, we are to consider *God* and *ourselves* in this matter?

Second. What our yielding ourselves to him, so considered, must include.

First. How are we to consider or look upon *God* in this affair? You are to consider him both as he is in himself, and according to the relations he bears to you; whether before your yielding yourselves to him, or in, and upon your so doing.

1. As He is in himself. You that have heard, or now read what I have said, and do write, here make a stand, and bethink yourselves a while!

What! Are you about yielding yourselves to God! Sure you ought to be thinking of it as soon as you hear his claim laid to you.

But do you now know with whom you have to do? Too many have the name of God, that great and awful name! in their mouth or ear, and have no correspondent thought in their mind; it passes with them as a transient sound, as soon over as another common word, of no greater length: and leaves no impression. Perhaps there is less in their minds to answer it, than most other words which men use in common discourse. For they have usually distinct thoughts of the things they speak of: otherwise they should neither understand one another nor themselves, but might speak of a horse, and mean a sheep: or be thought to mean so. And it would no more move a man, or impress his mind, to hear or mention a jest, than a matter of life and death. But the holy and reverend name of God is often so slightly mentioned, as in common oaths, or in idle talk is so merely taken in vain, that if they were on the sudden stopped, and asked what they thought on, or had in their mind, when they mentioned that word, and were to make a true answer, they cannot say they thought of any thing: as if the name of God, the All! were the name of nothing! Otherwise had they thought what that great name signifies, either they had not mentioned it, or the mention of it had struck their hearts! and even overwhelmed their very souls! I could tell you what awe and observance hath been wont to be expressed in reference to that sacred name, among a people that were called by it; and surely the very sound of that name ought ever to shake all the powers of our souls, and presently form them to reverence and adoration.

Shall we think it fit to play or trifle with it, as is too common? My friends, shall we now do so, when we are called upon "to yield ourselves to God?" Labour to hear and think, and act intelligently, and as those that have the understandings of men. And now especially in this solemn transaction, endeavour to render God great to yourselves: enlarge your minds, that as far as is possible and needful, they may take in the entire notion of him. As to what he is in himself, you must conceive of him as a Spirit, as his own word, which can best tell us what he is, instructs us; and so as a Being of far higher excellency than any thing you can see with your eyes, or touch with your hands, or that can come under the notice of any of your senses. You may easily apprehend spiritual being to be the source and spring of life, and self-moving power. This world were all a dead unmoving lump, if there were no such thing as spirit; as your bodies when the soul is fled. You must conceive him to be an eternal, self-subsisting Spirit, not sprung up into being from another, as our souls are; but who, from the excellency of his own being, was necessarily of, and from himself: comprehending originally and eternally in himself the fulness of all life and being. I would fain lead you here, as by the hand, a few plain and easy steps. You are sure that somewhat now is, of this you can be in no doubt; and next you may be as sure that somewhat hath, of itself, ever been. For if nothing at all now were, you can easily apprehend it impossible that any thing should ever be, or of itself now begin to

be, and spring up out of nothing. Do but make this supposition in your own minds, and the matter will be as plain to you as any thing can be, that if nothing at all were now in being, nothing could ever come into being: wherefore you may be sure, that because there is somewhat now in being, there must have been somewhat or other always in being, that was eternally of itself. And then to go a little farther, since you know there are many things in being that were not of themselves, you may be sure that what was always of itself, had in it a sufficiency of active power to produce other things, otherwise nothing that is not of itself could ever be. As you know that we were not of ourselves; and the case is the same as to whatsoever else our eyes behold.

You must conceive of God, therefore, as comprehending originally in his own being, which is most peculiar to himself, a power to produce all whatsoever being, excellency and perfection is to be found in all the whole creation. For there can be nothing which either is not, or arises not from what was of itself. And therefore that he is an absolutely, universally, and infinitely perfect being, and therefore that life, knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, truth, and whatsoever other conceivable excellencies, do all in highest perfection, belong, as necessary attributes, unchangeably and without possibility of diminution unto him. And all which his own word, agreeable to the plain reason of things, doth in multitudes of places ascribe to him; as you that are acquainted with the Bible cannot but know. You must therefore conceive of him, as the

All in All. So great, so excellent, so glorious a One he is, to whom you are to surrender and yield yourselves.

You are to conceive of him as most essentially One, for there can be but one All. And so his word teaches you to conceive. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord."—"We know there is no other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many, but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him." Your thoughts therefore need not be divided within you, nor your minds hang in doubt, to whom you are to betake and yield yourselves: there is no place or pretence for halting between two opinions. He most righteously lays the sole claim to you; "a just God and a Saviour, and there is none besides him." And so we are told often in that and the foregoing chapters. He whose far discerning eye projects its beams every way, and ranges through all infinity, says, "he knows not any."

Yet again you are to conceive of him as Three in One; and that in your yielding yourselves to him; as the prescribed form, when this surrender is to be made in baptism, directs; which runs thus, "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." You are not to be curious in your inquiries beyond what is written in this matter, how far the subsistence in the Godhead are three, and in what sense one; they cannot be both in the same sense. But there is latitude enough to conceive, how they may be

distinct from each other, and yet agree in one nature; which in none of them depending upon will and pleasure, sets each of them infinitely above all created beings: which for the divine "pleasure only was and is created." And that we so far conceive of them as three, as to apprehend some things spoken of one, that are not to be affirmed of another of them, is so plain, of so great consequence, and the whole frame of practical religion so much depends thereon; and even this transaction of yielding up ourselves, which must be introductive and fundamental to all the rest, that it is by no means to be neglected in our daily course, and least of all in this solemn business, as will more appear anon. In the mean time, set this ever blessed, glorious God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost before your eyes, as to whom, thus in himself considered, you are now to yield yourselves.

2. You must conceive of him according to the relations which he bears towards you, partly before your yielding yourselves to him, and partly in and upon your doing it. That is,

1st, Before you do any such thing, you must conceive of him, as,

(1.) Your Creator, the author of your being, "of whom and through whom, and to whom are all things." He that made you, demands you for himself. You are required to yield yourselves to him that gave you breath.

(2.) As the continual sustainer of your being; and who renews your life unto you every moment; "in whom you live, and move, and have your being,"

continually; so that if he should withdraw his supports, you immediately drop into nothing.

But these are things common to you with all other creatures; and signifv, therefore, his antecedent right in you, before you have yielded yourselves, upon which you ought to do it, and cannot without great injustice to him decline doing it. There are other considerations also you ought to entertain concerning him in this your yielding yourselves to him, namely, of some things which are partly and in some sense before it, and which it supposes, but which partly also, and in a more especial sense would follow, ānd be inferred by it.

2nd, Therefore you are to consider the relations which he bears to you in your actually doing this. Principally, this fourfold consideration you should have of him in your yielding yourselves to him, namely, as your Owner, your Teacher, your Ruler, and your Benefactor, and all these with the addition of Supreme; it being impossible he should have a superior; or that there should be any one above him in any of these. And he is in some sense all these to you before you can have yielded yourselves, as may, in great part, be collected from what hath been already said; but when you yield yourselves to him, he will be all these to you in a far higher, nobler, and more excellent sense; and you are to yield yourselves to him as such, or that in your so doing, he may actually become such to you.

First, As your Owner: the God whose you are (as the Apostle speaks, Acts xxvii. 23. and whom, as it there follows, and is naturally consequent, you are to

serve.) You were his by a former right, as all things, being made by him, are. But you are to yield yourselves to him, that you may be more peculiarly his, in a sense more excellent in itself, and more comfortable to you: "If you will obey—you shall be to me a peculiar treasure above all people, for all the earth is mine." Of such as fear him, the great God says, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." Your yielding yourselves adds nothing to his right in you; you therein only recognize, and acknowledge the right he had in you before, but it adds to you a capacity and a qualification, both by the tenor of his gospel covenant, and in the nature of the thing, for such nobler uses as otherwise you cannot serve for. As the more contemptible lumber about a man's house may be as truly his, as the most precious things; but neither doth he intend, nor can such meaner things admit to be the ornaments, either of his person, or his house. The great God intends his devoted peculiar people to be to him "a crown and royal diadem," when "he puts away the wicked of the earth like dross." "In a great house there are not only vessels of silver and gold, but also of wood, and of earth." But it is only the purged and sanctified soul (which is also a self-devoted one) that shall be the vessel unto honour, being made meet for the master's use, and prepared to every good work. Persons and things acquire a sacredness by being devoted to God. Persons especially, that can and do devote themselves, are highly ennobled by it; he hereupon, besides their relative holiness, really more and more

sanctifies and frames them for his own more immediate service and communion. Of such a people he tells us, that he hath formed them for himself, and they shall praise him: and to them he saith, (intending it manifestly in the more eminent sense,) "Thou art mine." Such may with a modest and humble, but with a just confidence freely say, "I am thine, save me." In yielding yourselves consider therefore first, that he is your Owner by an unquestionable former right, and let that effectually move you to do it with all your hearts. For will you not give him his own? When you account duty to your prince obliges you to "give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," will you not "give to God the things that are God's?" And will you not know him for your Owner? "The ox knows his owner." Or will it satisfy you to be in no other kind his, than brutes and devils are, that either through an incapacity of nature cannot acknowledge him, or through a malignity of nature will not? O yield yourselves, with humble desire and expectation that he will vouchsafe otherwise to own you!

Secondly, As your Teacher; so indeed he also is to all men, though they never yield themselves to him. He that "teaches man knowledge," shall not he know? There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding. Yea, and inferior creatures, as they all owe their natures, and peculiar instincts to him, may be said to have him for their teacher too. But will it content you to be so only taught by him? There is another sort of teaching, which, if you yield yourselves to him as

your great instructor, he will vouchsafe unto you. The things you know not, and which it is necessary you should know, he will teach you, that is, such things as are of real necessity to your true and final welfare, not which only serve to please your fancy, or gratify your curiosity. For his teaching respects an appointed, certain end, suitable to his wisdom and mercy, and to the calamity and danger of your state. The teaching requisite for perishing sinners, was, "what they might do to be saved." And when we have cast about in our own thoughts never so much, we have no way to take but to yield ourselves to God, who will then be our most undeceiving guide. To whom it belongs to save us at last, to him only it can belong to lead us in the way to that blessed end.

Many anxious inquiries, and fervent disputes there have been, how one may be infallibly assured of the way to be saved. They are to be excused who think it not fit, but upon very plain grounds, to venture so great a concern; or to run so great a hazard in a mere compliment to any man, or party of men. Confident expressions, as, my soul for yours, and such like, signify nothing with a cautious considering man, except that such as them care as little for his soul as their own. The papal infallibility some would have us trust to at a venture, and would make us think it rudeness to doubt it; when nobody stands upon good manners in endeavouring to escape a ruin; when a great part of their own communion trust not to it. (The Gallican Church, &c.) And some of them have written strongly

against it. (Du Pin, &c.) The accurate stating and discussing of the controversy, how far, or in what sense any such thing as infallible light may belong to the Christian church, are not fit for this place, nor for a discourse of this nature. It is enough now to say, that this claim hereof to the Pope or Bishop of Rome, as such,

First, Cannot be proved.

Second, May be plainly disproved.

First, It cannot be proved. For since no principles of common reason are pretended sufficient to prove it of any man, or of him more than another, it must be proved by supernatural Revelation, if at all. But in the written word of God there is no such thing. Pretences from thence are too vain to be refuted or mentioned. And if any other Revelation should be pretended, it will be a new, and as impossible a task to prove the Divinity of that Revelation, so as to infer upon the world an obligation to believe it. Nor is it necessary to insist upon this; because,

Second, It may be plainly disproved: for the same thing cannot be both true and false. And it sufficiently disproves such a man's infallibility, or the impossibility of his erring, that it can be evidently proved he hath erred.

As when he hath determined against the express word of Christ, forbidding them (to take one or two instances among many) to drink of the eucharistical cup, whom he hath commanded to drink of it. Or, to mention a more important one, when believers in Christ, or lovers of him, are pronounced damned, who he hath said shall not perish, but have everlast-

ing life, and the crown of righteousness. Or when, on the other hand, pardon of sin and eternal life are pretended to be given to such, whom the evangelical law condemns to death.

When one to whom this privilege hath been asserted to belong, hath determined against another, to whom, upon the same grounds, it must equally belong. As it is well known in the Christian church, that Pope might be alleged against Pope, and one papal constitution against another. Not to insist on what might be shown out of their own history, that the same Pope hath, being so, changed his judgment in a point of doctrine, and left us to divine when he was the fallible, and when the infallible Pope. And again,

When there have been determinations against the common uncorrupted senses of mankind, as that what their sight, and touch, and taste assures them is bread, is said to be the flesh of a human body.

For if you cannot be sure of what both your own, and the sound senses of any other man would tell you, you can be sure of nothing at all. You cannot be sure you see one another, and hear me speaking to you; nor be sure when you heard the transforming words, "this is my body;" or much less that they were ever spoken, if you heard them not: or that that was bread and not a stone, or a piece of clay that is pretended to be transubstantiated by them. The foundation of all certainty were upon these terms taken away from among men on earth: and upon the same common grounds upon which it is pretended you ought to believe that which is

shown or offered you to be the flesh of a man, and not bread any longer, you must believe or judge the quite contrary, that it is bread still, and not flesh, and consequently that he is far from being infallible, but doth actually err, upon whose authority you are directed to believe otherwise.

And indeed the claimed infallibility is by this sufficiently disproved, that there is no imaginable way of proving it. For if there were any such thing, it must be by God's own immediate gift, and vouchsafement—How otherwise should a man be made infallible? And if so, it must be for an end worthy of a wise and a merciful God; whereupon for the same reason, for which he should have made such a man infallible, he should have made it infallibly certain to other men, that he hath made him so. Whereas there is no one point wherein his infallible determination can be pretended to be necessary, against which there is more to be said than against the pretence itself of his infallibility; nor for which, less is to be said than can, with any colour, or without highest and most just contempt, be said for it. The most weighty thing that I have known alleged is, the great expediency of an infallible judge. But if we will think that a good way of arguing, that things are, in fact, so or so, because we can fancy it would be better if they were; we may as well prove that all mankind are sincere Christians, or there is no sin in the world, nor ever was, and a thousand things besides in the natural world, that never were, or will be, because it appears to us it would be for the better. So much is the foolishness of man wiser than God.

Besides, that sanctity must be judged as necessary to the final salvation and felicity of the souls of men as orthodoxy, or exemption from doctrinal error, by all with whom either Christian religion, or common reason signifies any thing. For the same reason, therefore, for which it can be thought necessary God should have put it into the power of any man to make others not err, he should have put it equally into his power to make them holy, to renew and change their hearts and lives. But what man hath this power? And one would reasonably expect, if either were, that both powers should be lodged in the same man; which if they should pretend, who assert the other unto one man, their own histories might make them blush, unless they can think it more probable that he can and will effectually sanctify another, and make him holy, who is himself most infamously impure and unholy, than that he can secure another from erring in matters of doctrine, who cannot secure himself.

But then it may be said, If such sure light and guidance is not to be found or had from one man, it must be from some community or body of men in the Christian church. For, can it be thought God should have taken care to settle a religion in the world, on purpose for the saving of men's souls, that yet affords no man any certainty of being saved by it?

I answer, yes, there is a certain, undeceiving light afforded by it to the whole body of sincere Christians sufficient, and intended, not to gratify a vain humour, but to save their souls, and which you can only, and may confidently expect by yielding yourselves to God

as your Teacher. As it cannot agree with the absolute perfection of his nature to be himself deceived in any thing, it can, you may be sure, as little agree with it to deceive you, or let you mistake your way, in the things wherein he hath encouraged and induced you to commit and intrust yourselves to his conduct and guidance. Will he let a soul wander and be lost, that hath entirely given up itself to be led and taught by him? His word hath at once expressed to you his nature, and his good-will towards you, in this case. "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." But what sinners? the next words tell you, "the meek (self-resigned ones, humble, teachable learners) he will guide in judgment," or with judgment, (as that particle admits to be read,) he will guide them judiciously, and surely, so that your hearts need not misgive, or suspect, or doubt to follow: "The meek will he teach his way." Who would not wish and be glad to have such a teacher? "You shall know (how express is his word!) if you follow on to know the Lord;" for, "his going forth is prepared as the morning." You do not need to devise in the morning how to create your own light, it is prepared and ready for you; the sun was made before you were, and it keeps its course, and so constantly will God's own light shine to you, without your contrivance or care, for any thing but to seek it, receive it, and be guided by it.

Know your advantage in having such a teacher.

He will teach you *inwardly;* even your very hearts, and so as his instructions shall reach the

centre, the inmost of your spirits. "God that made light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And when that holy good man had been solacing himself with highest pleasure in considering this, that God was his portion, so contented and satisfying a one, that he cannot forbear saying, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage." He presently adds, "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel." I should never else have thought of such a thing: it had never come into my mind to think of choosing God for my portion. I should have done like the rest of the vain world, have followed shadows all my days. My reins also instruct me in the night season. He will so teach you, as to make you teach yourselves, put an abiding word into you, that shall talk with you when you sit in your houses, and walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up, and whereby you shall be enabled to commune with your own hearts upon your beds, while others sleep, and revolve, or roll over in your minds, dictates of life. You will not need to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? Or, Who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ again from the dead? For the word will be nigh thee, not in thy mouth only, but in thine heart." You will have an ingrafted word, and the law of your God will be in your heart, so as none of your steps shall slide. This is our Lord's own interpretation of divers words of the prophets, that in the days of

the general diffusion of holy, vital light, which was to be after his own appearance in the world, " They shall be all taught of God," that is, so as to have their hearts inclined towards himself, and drawn to him, as the reference of these words to those of the foregoing verse shows. Wherein,

Lies your further advantage, that by him you shall be taught *effectually*. Other teaching, as it doth but reach the ear, or only, at the most, beget some faint notions in the mind, that you are little the better for, his shall produce real fruit; he is the Lord your God who teaches you to profit; and who by gentle and unforcible, but by most prevailing insinuations, shall slide in upon your spirits, win them by light and love, and allure them to a compliance with what shall be in the end safe and happy for yourselves. He will instruct you, though not with a violent, yet with a strong hand, so as not to lose his kind design. Others teach you, and leave you what they found you; convinced, perhaps, but not changed; unable to resist any ill inclination, or your disinclination to that which was good. Power will accompany his teaching; a conquering power that will secretly constrain and captivate your hearts; and how pleasant a victory will that be to yourselves! O the peace and joy you will find springing up within you, when once you feel yourselves overcome! The most that a man can say to you is, what the prophet Samuel once said, (so great and so good a man,) " God forbid I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way." He could only show that

way, and pray that God would do the rest; which implies God only can so teach it you, as to make you walk in it.

I am not persuading you to slight human teaching; you will need it; and it is among the gifts which your glorious Redeemer "being ascended on high," hath given to men, that is, pastors and teachers. But understand their teaching to be only subordinate, and ministerial. Without, or against God, you are to call no man master or teacher upon earth.

And thus far their teaching is to be regarded, as it agrees,

With what God doth inwardly teach you, by that common light which shines in every man's own bosom, that with a sincere mind attends to it, and which is too little attended to. There are truths too commonly held in unrighteousness, seated generally in the minds and consciences of men; by which, though they have not another law, "they are a law to themselves;" and for the stifling and resisting of which, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them. And from such truths they might infer others, and where God affords external helps, come to discern a sure ground whereupon to understand that what is contained besides in the frame of Christian doctrine is true; being enabled to judge of the evidences that prove the whole revelation thereof to be from God; and nothing being in itself more evident than that what he hath revealed is true. And withal God is graciously pleased to shine into minds that with upright aims set themselves to inquire out and understand his mind; and

so farther light comes to be superadded to that which is common. Now take heed how you neglect what a man teaches you, agreeably to that inward light which is already, one way or other, in your own minds and consciences. To this in some part, and in great part we are to appeal in our teaching you: so the more early Christian teachers did; "Not handling," say they, "the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." In the most deeply fundamental things that concern your practice every day, we may appeal to yourselves, and your own consciences. If we say to you, Ought you not to live according to his will that gave you breath? Should you not above all things fear and love, and trust, and obey him that made you and all things? Should you not do as you would be done unto? Should you not take more care for your immortal souls, than for your mortal flesh? You must every one say, I believe in mine own conscience this is so. If I appeal to you in the very thing I am speaking of, should you not yield yourselves to God, whose creatures you are? I doubt not any of you will say, I think in my very conscience I should. We have you witnesses against yourselves, if you will not hear us in such things. And again, it being a matter very capable of plain proof, that those writings which we call the Holy Scriptures, were from God, our teaching ought so far to be regarded by you, as,

We can manifest to you that it agrees with the Scriptures. And we are sure he will never

teach you inwardly against what he hath there taught. Will the God of truth say and unsay the same thing? That were to overthrow the design of all his instructions, and to subvert the authority which he requires men to reverence. No man could expect to be regarded on such terms. And by this rule freely examine all that we teach you, as our Saviour directed the Jews to do, John v. 39. And for the doing whereof, the apostle commended the Berean Christians. And we have here the same advantage at length, though not so immediately upon your consciences; which cannot but judge that whatsoever is found in that word which you confess to be divine, must be most certainly true.

And if within such limits you take the help of men for your instruction; having yielded yourselves to God as your supreme and highest teacher, you are upon safe terms. Only be sincere in listening to his dictates, whether internal or external. Let not a prepossessed heart, or vicious inclination be their interpreter. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Thirdly, You must consider God, in your yielding yourselves, as your Sovereign Ruler. For "to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey;" as by ver. 16. Though teaching and ruling may be diversely conceived of, they cannot be separate in this case. The nobler and final part of God's teaching you, is teaching you your duty; what you are to practise and do. And so when he teaches you, he commands you too; and leaves it not arbitrary to you whether you will

be directed by him or not. What is his by former right, and by after-consent, and self-resignation, shall it not be governed by him; if it be a subject capable of laws and government, as such consent shows it to be? Your yielding yourselves to God is not an homage but a mockery, if you do it not with a resolution to receive the law from his mouth; and that wherein soever he commands, you will to your uttermost obey. But in this, and the other things that follow, my limits constrain me to more brevity. Only let not this apprehension of God be frightful, yea, let it be amiable to you, as in itself it is, and cannot but be to you, if you consider the loveliness of his government, the kind design of it, and how suitable it is to the kindest design; that it is a government first and principally over minds, purposely intended to reduce them to a holy and peaceful order, wherein it cannot but continue them, when that kingdom comes to be settled there, which stands "in righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost," and all the laws whereof are summed up in love; being such "also as in the keeping whereof there is great reward."

Fourthly, You are to consider him, and accordingly to yield yourself, as your greatest Benefactor, or rather as your best and supreme good. Indeed you cannot sever his being your ruler from his being your benefactor, more than his being your teacher from his being your ruler, when the tendency and design of his government are understood. For it is a very principal part of our felicity to be under his government, and he doth you the greatest good by ruling

you, when otherwise nothing is more evident than that you would run yourselves into the greatest of evil, and soon be most miserable creatures. You are now so far happy as you are subject to his government, and that which it aims at is to make you finally and completely happy. For it is the design of his government, not only to regulate your actions, but your inclinations, and principally towards himself. You have been "alienated from the life of God," were become strangers to him, yea, and "enemies in your very minds,"—"for the carnal mind is enmity against God." The very business of his government is, in the first place, to alter the temper of your minds; for continuing carnal, they "neither are subject to the law of God, nor can be," as the same place tells you. Therefore, if his government take place in you, and you become subject, you "become spiritual, the law of the Spirit of Life" having now the possession and the power of you. Nor was it possible he should ever be an effectual benefactor to you, without being thus an overpowering ruler, so do these things run into one another. To let you have your own will, and follow your carnal inclination, and cherish and favour you in this course, were to gratify you to your ruin, and concur with you to your being for ever miserable: which you may see plainly if you will understand wherein your true felicity and blessedness must consist, or consider what was intimated concerning it, in the proposal of this head; that he is to be your benefactor, in being to you himself, your supreme and only satisfying good. He never doth

you good effectually and to purpose, till he overcome your carnal inclination. For while that remains, will you ever mind him? Can you love him, desire after him, or delight in him? The first and most fundamental law which he lays upon you is, that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and might." What will become of you if you cannot obey this law? This world will shortly be at an end, and you must, it is like, leave it sooner; you are undone, if your hearts be not before-hand so framed as that you can savour and take complacency in a better and higher good. You will shortly have nothing left you but himself; you will be plucked away from your houses, and lands, and friends, and all your outward comforts; and now in what a case are you, if you can take no pleasure or satisfaction in God! You are therefore to yield up yourself to him in full union, as with your most grateful and delectable good; with this sense possessing your soul, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? or whom on earth can I desire besides thee?"

And thus you are to look upon God in your yielding yourselves to him.

You are to yield yourselves to his claim as your rightful Owner.

To his instruction, as your undeceiving Teacher.

To his government, as your gracious sovereign Ruler. And,

To the enjoyment of him, as your best and most satisfying good. Or your self-communicating Benefactor.

But it also concerns you to have distinct and right thoughts of the state of your case, and how things are between him and the sons of men, that you may duly apply yourselves to him in so great a transaction. The gospel under which you live tells you, he treats with men in and by a mediator, his own Son, who came down into this wretched world of ours, in great compassion to our miseries, and took our nature, was here on earth among us an incarnate God. God manifested in the flesh. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us likewise of the same, and in that nature of ours died for us, to make way that we might yield ourselves to God, and be accepted. "No man now comes to the Father, but by him." He must be acknowledged with great reverence, and a most profound homage must be rendered to him. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father." And it being his pleasure to treat with us by his Son, and the case requiring that we apply ourselves to him, we are to take notice of him according to those capacities wherein Scripture represents him to us. And it represents him agreeably to those same notions according to which we have shown we are to consider God the Father in this matter; so as that Christ being the Mediator between him and us, when we yield ourselves to him ultimately, and finally, under the notions that have been mentioned, we are first to yield ourselves to his Son, Christ Jesus our Redeemer, under the like notions. For,

[1.] Being to yield ourselves to God as our owner,

we must know, the Father hath "given all things into the hands of the Son," and that "he is Lord of all," which, in the first sense, signifies him to be, by the Father's constitution, the owner of all things, even as he is the Redeemer. For, he therefore died and rose again, "that he might be Lord of the dead and living," that is, of both worlds; agreeably to what he himself speaks immediately upon his resurrection from the dead; "All power is given to me both in heaven and earth."

[2.] And for those other notions of God under which we have shown, we are to yield ourselves to him, as our teacher, ruler, and benefactor, they correspond to that threefold office of Christ, of which you cannot but have heard much, namely, of Prophet, King, and Priest, so that we are to commit ourselves to him, when we yield ourselves to God, as a teacher come forth from God, and who reveals him to us whom no man hath seen at any time: as one that must reign over us, and over the greatest on earth, Luke xix. 14—27. Psal. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. and by whom we are to be reconciled to God, and restored to the enjoyment of him.

And because our blind minds and perverse hearts need light and grace from above, to direct and incline us hereto, therefore hath the Spirit of the Father and the Son a great work to do in us to this purpose. Whereupon we are to yield ourselves to that blessed Spirit also, as our enlightener and sanctifier: which our being directed to "walk in the Spirit," and our being told that "they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his," and,

" that as many as are the sons of God, are led by his Spirit," do plainly show.

You see then we are to yield ourselves to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which also our having those great names named upon us in our baptism (as we before told you) doth import.

And how necessary all this is, you will see, if,

II. We consider how we are to look upon *ourselves* in this transaction; that is,

1. We are to consider ourselves as God's creatures, being, as you have heard, to consider him, as our Creator; and so we must reckon we owe ourselves to him, and do but yield him what we owe, and what was his before. For, how can you but be his, who of his mere pleasure hath raised you out of nothing?

2. We must remember we have been apostate creatures, such as had fallen, and revolted from him; and so our yielding ourselves to him is a giving ourselves back to him, having injuriously withdrawn and withheld ourselves from him before. And because the injury was so great as we could never make any recompence for, therefore it was necessary such a Mediator should be appointed between God and us, for whose sake only we can expect to be accepted when we yield ourselves. So great a Majesty was not to be approached by offending creatures without so great a days-man, and peace-maker.

3. We must consider ourselves as impure, and every way unfit for the divine presence, service, and converse, and who did therefore need the power of the Holy Ghost to be put forth upon us to make us

fit; and that therefore our case required we should put ourselves into such hands for that purpose.

4. We are to consider ourselves as under the gospel, as sinners invited and called back to God; as such whose case is not desperate; or who need to abandon ourselves to ruin, though we have greatly offended, as if there were no hope. We are to consider ourselves with distinction from the condition of other fallen creatures. The angels that fell and kept not their first station have no gospel sent to them to invite them back, and persuade them again to yield themselves to God, as you have. Into what a transport should this thought put you! how should it mollify you! O what a yielding temper and disposition of spirit should it work in you towards this gracious call, and just challenge, which the great God now gives you, and makes unto you!

Thus far then you see how you are to consider God and yourselves in this your yielding yourselves to him. You are now next to consider,

Second. What your yielding yourselves to God according to such considerations, must include, or be accompanied with. For it is not reasonable to think you have no more to mind in this matter, than only what is contained in the bare abstract nature of such an act; but looking upon your case in its circumstances, and considering the state of things between God and you, it greatly concerns you to see to it, that the matter be suitably carried to this state of your case. **Whereupon,**

1. Your yielding yourselves to God must be ac-

companied with very deep and serious repentance. It is a most penitential surrender you are now to make of yourselves to him; for you are to remember that you are but now coming back out of a state of apostacy from your Sovereign and most rightful Lord. Yea though you are but renewing your surrender of yourselves, having done somewhat herein before, you are yet to consider this was your case; and perhaps some never have yet seriously thought of any such thing, but lived in this world hitherto, as if you were your own, and there were no Lord over you: O then with what inward remorse, with what brokenness of heart, with what relentings and self-accusings should this thing now be done! you should come, smiting upon the thigh, and saying within yourselves, What have I done? So long Lord have I lived in this world of thine, which thou madest, and not I, as if I might do in it, and with myself, what I pleased! I have usurped upon thy unquestionable right in me, have lived to myself and not to thee; I am now convinced this was a very undutiful, unlawful way of living. Let him hear you (as he once heard Ephraim, or shall do) bemoaning yourselves, and saying, "Turn me and I shall be turned, thou art the Lord my God." How can you think of yielding yourselves now at length to God, without being deeply sensible of your having deferred it so long, and that you have not done it sooner? and how great the iniquity was of your former course; that you have all this while committed a continual robbery upon him that gave you breath? Will a man rob God? And if you

say, Wherein have I robbed him? you have robbed him of yourself, a greater thing than of tythes and offerings. And this robbery was sacrilege. For every thing due and devoted to God, hath a sacredness upon it; and consider, were you not, upon his just claim, in your baptism devoted to him? how should this startle you! you have constantly alienated from him a sacred thing! You have been in a continual contest with him about one of the highest rights of his Sovereignty, yea, and of his Godhead, for to that, nothing is more peculiar than to be Lord of all. So that the controversy between him and you hath been, who shall be God? You have refused him his own creature: how high a crime was this! Know then you have been a great transgressor, a grievous revolter, and now therefore yield yourself to him with a melting broken heart, or you do nothing.

2. It must be done with great deliberation; not as the mere effect of a sudden fright. What is done in a rash haste may be as soon undone. Leisurely consider, and take the whole compass of the case; weigh with yourselves the mentioned grounds upon which you are to yield yourselves, and the ends you are to do it for, that things may be set right between him and you, that you may return into your own natural place and station, that you may be again stated in that subordination to your Sovereign Lord which fitly belongs to you; that he may have his right which he claims, and you the mercy which you need. Here is place for much consideration. And when Israel is complained of as less willing to ac-

knowledge God for his owner and master, than the ox and ass were to acknowledge theirs, all is resolved into this, that the people did not consider, Isa. i.

3. It must be done with judgment, which is the effect of such consideration. When all things have been well weighed that belong to this case, then let this formed judgment pass, Lord, I ought to be thine, and no other's. Say to him hereupon, with a convinced judgment and conscience, O God, I surrender myself, as now seeing none hath that right in me that thou hast; when the love of Christ becomes constraining upon souls, it is because they thus judge, that "they ought no longer to live to themselves, but to him." These things last mentioned will imply a rectified mind, which must be ingredient into this transaction, else it will be defective throughout.

4. It must be done with a fulness of consent; and herein it chiefly consists, when the soul says, Lord, I am now most entirely willing to be thine: This is your yielding yourselves. And hereby the covenant is struck between God and you, which consists in the expressed consent of the parties covenanting in the matters about which the covenant is. This covenant is about the parties themselves, who covenant, as the conjugal covenant is, which resembles it; namely, that they shall be one another's. God hath expressed his consent in his word and gospel, making therein the first overture to you. When you rejoin your own consent, the thing is done: this being the sum of his covenant, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people," as in many places

of Scripture it is gathered up. When therefore, as God hath openly testified his willingness to be their God who shall accept and take him to be so, you also are willing and do consent to, you do now "take hold on his covenant," matters are agreed between him and you; and you may take those words as spoken to you particularly: "I have entered into covenant with thee, and thou art become mine."

But then you must take notice that this is to be done with a full consent, which that is said to be which determines you, though it be not absolutely perfect. No grace in any faculty is perfect in this life. But as in human affairs, that will is said to be full, which is the spring of answerable following actions, so it is here. If a man have some inclination to do this or that, and do it not, it goes for nothing; if he do it, his will is said to be full, though he have some remaining disinclination. You may be said to yield yourselves to God, with a full consent, when you live afterwards as one devoted to him.

5. Your yielding yourselves to God must carry life in it, as the following words signify: "Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead." It must be a vital act, and have vigour in it. You must be capable of making that true judgment of your case, as it is verse 11. "of reckoning truly that you are dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ." Do it as feeling life to spring in your souls towards God in your yielding yourselves to him. What! will you offer God a carcass? not the "living sacrifice," which you see is required, Rom. xii. 1. Beg earnestly for his own

Spirit of life and power, that may enable you to offer up a living soul to the living God.

6. There must be faith in your yielding yourselves. For it is a committing, or intrusting yourselves to God, with the expectation of being saved, and made happy by him. So Scripture speaks of it, "I know whom I have believed, (or trusted,) and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day." It is suitable to the gracious nature of God, to his excellent greatness, to his design, to the mediatorship of his Son, to his promise and gospel-covenant, and to your own necessities, and the exigency of your own lost, undone state, that you do yield yourselves to him, as a poor creature ready to perish, expecting, not for your sake, but his own, to be accepted, and to find mercy with him. You do him the honour which he seeks, and which is most worthy of a God, the most excellent, and a self-sufficient being, when you do thus. You answer the intention of the whole gospel constitution, which bears this inscription, "to the praise of the glory of his grace," &c. It is honourable to him when you take his word, that they that believe in his Son, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. You herein set to your seal that he is true, and the more fully, and with the more significancy, when upon the credit of it you yield yourselves, with an assurance that he will not destroy nor reject a poor creature that yields to him, and casts itself upon his mercy.

7. Another ingredient into this yielding of yourselves must be love. As faith, in your yielding

yourselves to God, aims at your own welfare and salvation; so love, in doing it, intends his service, and all the duty to him you are capable of doing him. You must be able to give this as the true reason of your act, and to resolve it into this principle; I yield myself to God, because I love him, and from the unfeigned love I bear to him: to tell the world, if there were occasion, he hath captivated my heart with his excellencies and his love, and hereupon having nothing else, I tender myself to him, to tell himself, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" and because I do, I present myself to thee; it is all I can do. I wish myself ten thousand times better for thy blessed sake; and if I had in me all the excellencies of many thousand angels, I were too mean a thing, and such as nothing but thy own goodness could count worthy thine acceptance; because I love thee, I covet to be near thee, I covet to be thine, I covet to lead my life with thee, to dwell in thy presence; far be it from me to be as without thee in the world as heretofore. I love thee, O Lord, my strength, because thine own perfections highly deserve it, and because thou hast heard my voice, and hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling, and I yield myself to thee, because I love thee. I make an offer of myself to be thy servant; thy servant, O Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds; and now I desire to bind myself in new ones to thee, that are never to be loosed." And you can make no doubt but that it ought to be done therefore with dispositions and a temper suitable to the state you

are now willing to come into, that of a devoted servant; namely,

8. With great reverence and humility. For, consider to whom you are tendering yourself; to the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity"—to him that hath "Heaven for his throne, and Earth for his footstool:" and in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the world are but as grasshoppers, and the "nations of the earth as the drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance." Yea to him against whom you have sinned, and before whose pure eyes, you cannot, in yourself, but appear most offensively impure; so that you have reason to be ashamed, and blush to lift up your eyes before him.

9. And yet it surely ought to be with great joy and gladness of heart, that he hath expressed himself willing to accept such as you, and that he hath made you willing to yield yourselves. The very thought should make your heart leap and spring within you, that he should ever have bespoken such as we are to yield ourselves to him! when he might have neglected us, and let us wander endlessly, without ever looking after us more. How should it glad your hearts this day, to have such a message brought you from the great God, and which you find is written in his own word, to yield yourselves to him! Should not your hearts answer with wonder—"And blessed Lord! Art thou willing again to have to do with us! who left thee having no cause, and who returning can be of no use to thee!" O blessed be God that we may yield ourselves back unto him! that we are invited and encouraged to it.

And you have cause to bless God, and rejoice, if this day you feel your heart willing to yield yourselves to him, and become his. Do you indeed find yourselves willing? You "are willing in the day of his power." This is the day of his power upon your hearts. Many are called and refuse; he "often stretches out his hands, and no man regards." Perhaps you have been called upon often before this day to do the same thing, and neglected it, had no heart to it; and he might have said to you: Now I will never treat with you more; if you should call, I will not hear; if you stretch out your hands, I will not regard it, but laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh. But if now he is pleased to call once more, your hearts do answer, Lord, here we are, we are now ready to surrender ourselves; you may conclude he hath "poured out his Spirit upon you." The Spirit of the Lord is now moving upon this assembly: this is indeed a joyful day, the day which he hath himself made, and you ought to rejoice and be glad in it. When the people in David's days offered of their substance to God for the service of his house, it is said, "the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly." And David, we are told, "blessed God before all the congregation"—saying, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power—But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." If you are this day willing to offer yourselves, how much is this a greater thing! and it comes of him, and it is

of his own you are now giving him; for he had a most unquestionable right in you before.

10. You should do it with solemnity. For have you ever had a business of greater importance to transact in all your days? If you were to dispose of an estate, or a child, would you not have all things be as express, and clear, as may be; and would not they insist to have it so, with whom you deal in any such affair? And is there not a solemnity belonging to all such transactions? especially if you were to dispose of yourself; as in the conjugal covenant? though that is to be but for this short uncertain time of life; so as that the relation you enter into to-day, may be by death dissolved and broken off again to-morrow. How much more explicit, clear, and solemn, should this your covenanting with God in Christ be? wherein you are to make over your soul to him, and for eternity. You are to become his, under the bond of an everlasting covenant. You are entering a relation never to be broken off. This God is to be your God for ever and ever, and upon the same terms you are to be his. Is your immortal soul of less account with you than the temporal concerns of a mortal child, that you are placing out but for a term of years that soon expires? yea, or than a piece of ground, or a horse, or a sheep, about which how punctual and express are your bargains and contracts wont to be? Or are only the matters of your soul, and wherein you have to do with the great God, to be slightly managed? or to be huddled up in confusion? or to be slid over in silent intimations? It is true, that so express and

solemn dealing in yielding and giving up yourselves to God, is not needful on his part, who understands sincerity without any expression of yours; but it is needful on your part, that a deep and lasting impression may be made upon your spirits; which, if you be sincere, you will not only feel yourselves to need, but your own temper and inclination will prompt you to it; accounting you can never be under bonds strong and sure enough to him. You will not only apprehend necessity, but will relish and taste pleasure in any such transaction with the blessed God, in avouching him to be your God, and yourself to be his. The more solemn it is, the more grateful it will be to you.

Do so then: fall before his throne; prostrate yourself at his footstool; and having chosen your fit season, when nothing may interrupt you; and having shut up yourself with him, pour out your soul to him; tell him you are now come on purpose to offer yourself to him as his own. O that you would not let this night pass without doing so! Tell him you have too long neglected him, and forgotten to whom you belonged: humbly beseech him for his pardon, and that he will now accept of you, for your Redeemer's sake, as being through his grace resolved never to live so great a stranger to him, or be such a wanderer from him more. And when you have done so, remember the time; let it be with you a noted memorable day, as you would be sure to keep the day in memory when you became such-a-one's servant or tenant, or your marriage-day: renew this your agreement with God often, but forget it never.

Perhaps some may say, But what needs all this? were we not once devoted and given up to God in baptism? and is not that sufficient? To what purpose should we do again a thing that hath once been so solemnly done?

But here I desire you to consider, Are you never to become the Lord's by your own choice? Are you always to be Christians, only by another's Christianity, not by your own? And again, have you not broken your baptismal vow? have you not forgot it for the most part ever since? I am afraid too many never think of any such matter at all, that ever they were devoted to God by others, but only upon such an occasion as this, to make it an excuse that they may never do such a thing themselves. And consider, were these Christian Romans, on whom the apostle presses this duty, never baptized, think you? Read over the foregoing part of the chapter, wherein you find him putting them in mind that they had been baptized into Christ's death, and buried with him in baptism, and that therefore this was to be an argument to them why they should yield themselves to God; not why they should not.

Wherefore our way is now plain and open to what we have further to do, namely,

Second, To apply this practical doctrine, and press the precept further upon you, which hath been opened to you, and pressed by parts in some measure already, in our insisting on the several heads, which you have seen do belong to it; and are one way or other comprehended in it. Which will therefore

make this latter part of our work the shorter, and capable of being despatched in the fewer words; and with blessed effect, if the Spirit of the living God shall vouchsafe to co-operate, and deal with your hearts and mine. Shall we then all agree upon this thing? shall we unite in one resolution, We will be the Lord's? shall every one say in his own heart, For my part, I will, and so will I, and so will I? come now, one and all. This is no unlawful confederacy, it is a blessed combination! "Come then, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten." With whatsoever after solemnity you may renew this obligation, and bond of God upon your souls, as I hope you will do it, every one apart, in your closets, or in any corner, and you cannot do it too fully, or too often; yet let us now all resolve the thing; and this assembly make a joint surrender, and oblation of itself to the great God our Sovereign rightful Lord, through our blessed Redeemer and Mediator, by the eternal Spirit, (which I hope is breathing and at work among us,) as one living sacrifice, as all of us, alive from the dead, to be for ever sacred to him? O blessed assembly! O happy act and deed! With how grateful and well-pleasing an odour will the kindness and dutifulness of this offering ascend, and be received above! God will accept, heaven will rejoice, angels will concur, and gladly fall in with us. We hereby adjoin ourselves in relation, and in heart and spirit, to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born ones written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men

made perfect, and within a little while shall be actually among them. Is it possible there should be now among us any dissenting vote? Consider,

1. It is a plain and unquestionable thing you are pressed unto. A thing that admits of no dispute, and against which you have nothing to say, and about which you cannot but be already convinced. And it is a matter full of danger, and upon which tremendous consequences depend, to go on in any practice, or in any neglect, against a conviction of judgment and conscience. For your own heart and conscience must condemn you if you consider, and it betrays you if you consider not. How fearful a thing is it for a man to carry his own doom in his own bosom! to go up and down the world with a self-condemning heart, if it be awake, and which if it be not, yet cannot sleep always, and must awake with the greater terror at length. And in so plain a case it is most certainly God's deputy, and speaks his mind; "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things."

2. It is that, therefore, the refusal whereof none of you would avow. Who among us can have the confidence to stand forth and say, "I will be none of the Lord's?" Would any man be content to go with this writ upon his forehead from day to day? And doth not that signify such a refusal to be a shameful thing? That must needs be an ill temper of mind which one would be ashamed any one should know.

3. And it is a mean thing to dissemble, to be willing to be thought, and counted what we are not, or to do what in truth we do not.

4. And considering what inspection we are under, it is a vain thing. For we do not know that "eyes which are as a flame of fire," behold us, and pierce into our very souls? Do we not know "all things in us are naked and manifest to him with whom we have to do?" And that he discerns it, if there be any heart among us that is not sincere in this thing?

5. Consider that this is the very design of the gospel you live under. What doth it signify or intend, but to recall apostate creatures back again to God? What is the Christian Religion you profess, but a state of devotedness to God, under the conduct, and through the mediation of Christ? You frustrate the gospel, and make your religion a nullity, and an empty name, till you do this.

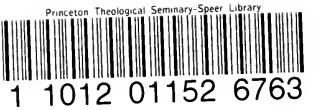
6. And how will you lift up your heads at last in the great day? and before this God the judge of all? You cannot now plead ignorance. If perhaps any among you have not been formerly so expressly called, and urged to this yielding yourselves to God; now you are: and from his own plain word it is charged upon you. Will not this be remembered hereafter? What will you say, when the great God, whose creature you are, speaks to you with the voice of thunder, and bids you gird up your loins, and give him an answer? "Were you not, on such a day, in such a place, demanded and claimed in my name? Were you not told, were you not convinced you ought to yield yourselves to me, and yet you did it not? Are you prepared to contest with your Maker? Where is your right, where is your power, to stand against me in this contest?"

7. But if you sincerely yield yourselves, the main controversy is at an end between the great God and you. All your former sins are pardoned and done away at once. Those glad tidings you have often heard that import nothing but "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men," plainly show, that the great God whom you had offended, hath no design to destroy you, but only to make you yield, and give him back his own. Though you have formerly lived a wandering life, and been as a vagabond on the earth from your true owner, it will be all forgotten. How readily was the returning prodigal received! and so will you. How quiet rest will you have this night, when upon such terms there is a reconciliation between God and you! You have given him his own, and he is pleased, and most of all for this, that he hath received you now to save you. You were his to destroy before, now you are his to save. He could easily destroy you against your will, but it is only with your will, he having made you willing, that he must save you. And his bidding you yield, implies his willingness to do so. O how much of gospel is there in this invitation to you to yield yourselves to God! consider it as the voice of grace. Will he that bids a poor wretch yield itself, reject or destroy when it doth so?

8. And how happily may you now live the rest of your days in this world. You will live under his care, for will he not take care of his own, those that are of his own house? An infidel would. You are now of his family, under his immediate government, and under his continual blessing.

And were you now to give an account where you have been to-day, and what you have been doing: If you say, you have been engaged this day in a solemn treaty with the Lord of heaven and earth, about yielding yourselves to him; and it be further asked, Well, and what was the issue? Have you agreed? Must you, any of you be obliged by the truth of the case to say, No:—astonishing answer! What! hast thou been treating with the great God, the God of thy life, and not agreed! What, man! Did he demand of thee any unreasonable thing! Only to yield thyself. Why that was in all the world the most reasonable thing. Wretched creature, whither now wilt thou go? What wilt thou do with thyself? Where wilt thou lay thy hated head? But if you can say, Blessed be God, I gladly agreed to the proposal; he gave me the grace not to deny him: then may it be said this was a good day's work, and you will have cause to bless God for this day as long as you have a day to live.

FINIS.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